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Charity. A tale. By the author of "Angelo Sanmartino.".

Anonymous

CHARITY.

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ANGELO SANMARTINO."

London:
THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
1862.

CHARITY.

CHAPTER I.

The sound of Sunday bells was floating on the air one fine May morning near the pleasant town of Winterford, when Mrs. Leslie, a widow lady, and her grand-children came forth from a handsome, red brick, old fashioned country mansion, which from the surrounding woods took he name of Grove House.

Secluded in a nest of verdure, it was one of those substantial yet tasteful dwellings, which make the passer by say: "Happy those whose home is here!" And he might say so of Grove House, at the time of which we are speaking, and not mistake, as often happens when we judge of that within by that which shews without.

Mrs. Leslie came down the stone steps with her young family about her, like a hen in the midst of her brood.

Mary, Alice, and Oliver, the children of Mrs. Leslie's late son, turned to the left, and took their way towards the venerable Cathedral, which is the boast and ornament of Winterford, while Mark, the son of Mrs. Leslie's daughter, turned with his grand-mother to the right, and followed a path leading through an adjoining meadow to a pretty Catholic chapel.

Here the Abbé Moreau, an old French Priest, ministered to a small flock of his persuasion, residing in the neighbourhood of Winterford.

This chapel had been restored and beautified by Mr. Austin Vernon, from whom Mrs. Leslie, his only child, inherited the surrounding property.

Miss Vernon, afterwards Mrs. Leslie, born of a Catholic family, remained faithful to her church, although she married a Protestant. This worthy couple, as often happened of yore, lived in love and harmony, although following their respective forms of worship, and by a mutual agreement,

frequent in such cases, the sons were educated Protestants, the daughters Catholics.

Of the children born of this marriage, one son and one daughter grew up.

The son married a Protestant lady, and, still young, died a widower, leaving to his mother the care of his children. In his will was a clause begging they might be educated Protestants, and Mrs. Leslie conscientiously fulfilled a behest which she regarded as sacred.

The daughter married Mr. Bevan, a Catholic gentleman; she died in giving birth to Mark, her first child, whose father did not long survive, and the education of the orphan having devolved entirely on his maternal grand-mother, she brought him up in her own faith, which had been that of his parents.

Mrs. Leslie was slowly recovering from the double bereavement of son and daughter, when she was again crushed by the blow which made her a widow.

It was well for her that she felt all she owed to her infant charges, for to a conscientious mind a stringent duty is a stay under severe trial, a consolation under grief.

Time and well directed exertion did their work, and brought first resignation and then comfort. A few years later Mrs. Leslie, we may say, was content, nay happy, in the midst of a fine promising gleeful progeny of grand-children.

See her as she sits on this Sunday afternoon, the presiding spirit, in the pleasant wainscotted parlour, where, returning from the church and chapel, the family surround the dinner-table. In her features mingle the traces of former sorrows with the expression of present peace and cheerfulness, as on her brow mix silver threads with the smooth brown hair.

On her right is her darling Mark, with his intellectual brow, expressive hazel eyes and feeling mouth; the image of his mother, Mrs. Leslie always said.

Next to him sits his cousin Mary, whose silvery laugh and quick roguish glance play like a sunbeam on all around. Small and slight of stature, yet very regal in her carriage, she is often called Queen Mab; and when she declares her will with a certain expression of her rosy mouth and turn of her pretty head, all know that they must obey the fairy mandate. She likes her own way and has it.

Opposite is Alice, the younger sister, taller but not nearly so striking. She is the happiest, kindest, creature in the world, always getting one or other out of trouble; the general friend, confidante and adviser, ready at any time to act second part.

By her side is Oliver, brother of the two girls, a red-haired warm-hearted boy for ever getting in and out of a passion, then begging pardon and shaking hands with all his might and main.

To complete the picture we must not forget, opposite to Mrs. Leslie, at the other end of the table, the Abbé Moreau, an old French Priest, regularly a guest at Grove House on Sunday and often in the course of the week. His tall slightly stooping figure, his white locks and small black skull cap, his gentle eyes and benevolent mouth offer the type of a venerable Priest.

How kindly he looks and smiles on all the circle, not less affectionately on Oliver and his sisters, though they are brought up out of the pale of his church, and no branch of their teaching is confided to him, than on Mark who has been not only his catechumen, but his pupil for several years previous to going to school.

The Abbé Moreau has been Chaplain of Grove

Chapel for twenty years. He lately heard, through an old friend, of the death of a sister his last surviving relative, and he is now summoned to France to take possession of the small inheritance she has bequeathed to him. The same correspondent mentioned a modest vicarship at present vacant near the Abbé's native town, and in gift of the Bishop of the diocese, his old school-fellow.

Would Monsieur Moreau become candidate for the vicarage of St. Pol? The Priest thanked his friend but declined the proposal.

This was the last Sunday before the Abbé's departure to settle his business in France.

Mark and Oliver were at the time come home for the holidays. Happy those holidays at the Grove!

In summer such nice canters on the ponies, such pleasant rambles in the woods, such boating, such haymaking, such cricketing!

In winter such skating, such dancing of reels, such duets and glees over the piano, such delightful novels round the blazing fire!

While with all this joyousness mingled sometimes wise influences or serious thought, not the

less effective that they came not always in the shape of a lesson, but stole over the mind as the viewless breeze sounds upon the ear, breathing solemnly at fitful intervals through the branches of the pine woods

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"Abbé," said Mrs. Leslie after dinner, "what day have you fixed to set out?"

"Wednesday, Madam, and I reckon that I shall be back in six weeks at latest."

"Who knows, that when you are in your own country once more, you may not change your mind and stay there?"

"Oh! grand-mamma!" broke like a groaning chorus from the four young people.

"I only say what is possible, my children."

"Not so, I think, dear Madam," replied the Abbé. "Read that letter, which I received yesterday," drawing one from his pocket and handing it to Mrs. Leslie. "When I tell you that I have already sent off a grateful but decided negative, you will judge that I am proof against temptation on this point."

Mrs. Leslie read the letter aloud; it was from the Bishop of —— to Monsieur Moreau, recall-

ing in affectionate terms their school-boy days, and pressing with flattering earnestness his nomination to the vicarship of St. Pol.

"I hate that Bishop," said Oliver abruptly.

"Oh, Oliver! So good a man and so kind to me!" exclaimed the Priest.

"Yes I do, because he wants to take you from us."

"Well but he will not take me away, and you must not harbour such feelings."

"Oliver does not mean that he hates any one who loves you, only that he would be dreadfully sorry if you left us not to come back," interposed Alice.

"That's just it," cried Oliver. "I beg your pardon, Monsieur l'Abbé, it was very wrong to say what I did of a friend of yours. But it would really be too bad if you had to go away. Who would be grand-mamma's best friend? And who would tell us such nice stories of France and of Napoleon's wars?"

"And who would be my second father?" said Mark taking the Abbé's hand.

"Oh! Abbé," exclaimed Mary, "if you do

not come back I shall never forget and never forgive you!"

"It would be very bad for us," observed Alice, "but we ought to wish Monsieur l'Abbé to do what makes him most happy, you know."

"How could I find it in my heart not to return to such dear affectionate young creatures?" remarked Monsieur Moreau.

"And yet," said Mrs. Leslie thoughtfully, "France may offer you more temptation than you now think; it is your native land and a Catholic country."

"It was in France," returned the Abbé, "my native land and a Catholic country, that your excellent departed husband, dear Mrs. Leslie, found me poor, sick and solitary. He helped me, nursed me, comforted me, and then, as if asking instead of conferring a favour, he inquired whether I could make up my mind to try a foreign land. He said that although he and his son were Protestants, his lady and daughter were Catholics. Would I be chaplain of Grove Chapel? Truly he was to me the good Samaritan, and I have lived ever since that time happy, and I may say *petted*

among a generation of good Samaritans." And his eyes, which glistened as he spoke, rested on the little Leslies.

"Aye," observed Mrs. Leslie, "you knew and loved the parents and you love the children."

The Abbé went to France, settled his business and was once more at home, in his neat cottage near Grove Chapel, long before Mark and Oliver's Christmas holidays came round.

Winter and summer succeeded each other, gliding softly by for several years, without working in Grove House any but those imperceptible changes which transform the boy into the youth and the youth into the man.

Mark and Oliver left school. Oliver went to college where he prepared for the church; a friend of his father's had long promised him a living near Winterford. Mark studied the law in London. There was a good opening for him as consulting Barrister in his native town, and he was to undertake the direction of his grand-mother's property.

Thus the future prospects of the young people had still Grove House for centre, and more fortu-

nate than many; Mrs. Leslie was not to see her brood scatter far and wide when they entered life.

This family, united by a remarkably strong bond of mutual affection and confidence, lived in harmony, and loved each other none the less that some were Protestants and some were Catholics.

The spirit of Christian charity was in the hearts of all.

This holy light shone upon the peaceful household, till suddenly obscured by a spirit of religious dissension which arose in Grove House like a storm blast.

Oliver was the first who clouded the calm sunshine of his home. When he had been a year at the University, a visible change came over him, and his naturally cheerful open temper, gave way to a gloomy reserve, which his very presence seemed to spread around him. Pursuits and amusements, which, with the rest of his family, he had been accustomed to look upon as innocent or desirable, now appeared to him in the light of sins. His sisters who followed their accustomed harmlessly cheerful course of life, were so per-

*criticism, censure, critical remark

petually assailed by his animadversions*, that their days became a succession of disputes, or of annoying little sacrifices to peace.

He brought them shoals of little books, which he insisted that they should read, and terribly irate he became if, as sometimes happened, he found one of the girls sleeping over his favourite volume, or hiding under its open page some other work more interesting to the fair reader.

This sort of interference and restraint went so far that his sisters, instead of enjoying his society as they had been used to do, felt it a relief when he returned to keep his terms, or when, while at home, he went out as often chanced, to attend some religious meeting in the neighbourhood.

One Sunday evening Oliver was gone to a Missionary Society. Mrs. Leslie begged the good Abbé Moreau, as she often did when he drank tea at the Grove, to read aloud a French book. He complied and took up Humbolt's Travels, which he had begun some time before with the young people.

Before the Abbé had finished, Oliver returned. He sat down for some time silently in a corner, then suddenly starting up exclaimed :

"Monsieur l'Abbé, if you were not the Minister of a false religion, you would not sin yourself, or set so sinful an example as to indulge in profane reading on a Sabbath evening."

The Abbé laid down his book and stared in silence, but Mrs. Leslie rose much moved; this was one of the very few times she was ever seen really angry.

"Oliver," she said, "this insolence towards my venerable friend, towards my religion, and therefore towards myself, is what I cannot tolerate. Your grand-father, a sincere Protestant, ruled his household twenty-five years, and never disapproved of such innocent recreation as this, which you have thought fit so unbecomingly to interrupt. Now interference, which I never met with from my respected husband, I will not endure from a grand-son."

"I am sorry if I anger you grand-mother," replied Oliver, "but I owe the truth to all here. It is a bad sign when truth is an offence. Good night." So saying he took up his candle and retired to bed, leaving the remainder of the company in a state of uncomfortable discomposure,

from which they sought refuge by speedily separating for the night.

Next morning early, Alice from her window saw Oliver walking in the garden, looking rather disconsolate. She dressed quickly and went down to join him. They had paced the gravel walk three times, before Oliver confessed that he was very sorry for having been too hasty in his expressions the preceeding evening, and a few minutes afterwards, the brother and sister were running across the meadow, that separated Grove House from Monsieur Moreau's neat cottage. As they approached, they saw the Abbé sitting near a table at the open window of his parlour. He smiled benevolently as Oliver rushed in to beg pardon over and over again for his late impropriety.

"My dear Oliver, you are a *brave garcon*, (under strong emotion his native tongue would come back upon the old Priest) only you have the blood a little boiling, that is a defect of youth which time will temper. But you have the right stuff at bottom. We shall always be good friends; *je défie* any one not to be so with you."

Having shaken hands vehemently with the Abbé, Oliver flew back home just in time to half squeeze his grand-mother to death, when she came down to breakfast, imploring her forgiveness, with promises never to offend in like manner again. He received his pardon with a tender kiss and something very like a tear on his cheek.

"Really, my excellent friend," said the Abbé to Mrs. Leslie a few hours later, Oliver is a noble youth, *un cœur d'or*. He is too vehement, but we must remember that he has not the advantage of a wise Director, to moderate the ardour of a young mind in the cause of what he erroneously believes to be truth. For this he is to be pitied not blamed."

The sequel of our tale will shew that this influence of the spiritual Director is not always exercised to temper excess of zeal. But we will not anticipate.

From this day Oliver strove, and not unsuccessfully, to avoid the recurrence of such ebullitions, as he had too often indulged from a false notion of duty. "I have been perhaps over

ready," would he say to Alice, "to see the mote in my brother's eye. Truly the grand principles of Protestantism are: the right and duty to examine the Scriptures according to the light which god vouchsafes to each, and liberty of conscience for all within the limits of the Christian faith. Just remind me of that if I slide into intolerance. I would fain not be illiberal, especially in the eyes of Catholics."

The late storm seemed to have cleared the air; cheerful serenity once more reigned in Mrs. Leslie's family, every thing went on well, and a still more happy prospect opened to the inhabitants of Grove House.

One of Mark's vacations was drawing to a close, and in a few days he was to exchange home for the office of the eminent special pleader, with whom he was completing his legal studies, when Oliver came into the parlour where his grand-mother and Alice were sitting.

"Where is Mark?" said he, "I do not find him either in the library or in his own room. I want him to go a walk with me over the hills this beautiful morning."

"He and Mary," replied Alice, "are gone together towards the mill, which she wished to sketch. You will find them if you go that way."

"Will you not come too Alice?"

"No, I mean to set some plants in the garden after yesterday's rain."

"That is a mere pretext," said Mrs. Leslie smiling, "her real motive is not to leave me, because my sprained foot still keeps me confined to my chair."

"Well, grand-mamma, if I can mind the garden and stay with you, I have two pleasures instead of one," answered Alice.

"All right," observed her brother, "so I say no more," and away he bounded.

But it was not his fate to find Mark and Mary. He went to the mill, but the mill knew them not that day; they had wandered, they did not themselves very well know where.

On reaching home, they came up to Mrs. Leslie's easy chair, bent down one on each side, kissed her, and Mark said: "Grand-mamma bless your children; Mary and I have plighted our faith to each other this day."

And the grand-mamma did give them her fond and tender blessing.

While still the countenances of the young pair glowed with newly confessed love, while Mary still hung about her sister's neck, Oliver came in.

Mark went up to him, held out his hand and said: "Oliver give also your consent to my happiness; Mary has promised to be my wife, and I promise you never to try and make her a Catholic. I would not that my joy should be for you a sorrow."

"My dear fellow," returned Oliver, "Mary has made an excellent choice; you are the very man I would myself have picked out of a thousand for her husband, but for . . . . . And who knows but one day . . . . . ?"

"Aye," interrupted Mary, "who knows indeed what my theological powers may do? I may make a brilliant convert, I rather like controversy."

"Do you?" said Mark: "well in you I will even love controversy, which has always been my aversion," and he kissed the fair theologian's hand.

The Abbé Moreau was quickly told of the intended marriage, and he heartily rejoiced that his good pupil had chosen *cette chère enfant.*"

common theme in her novels

The young people were to wait eighteen months before their union, for a clause in the will of Mary's father enjoined that his daughters should not marry before the age of twenty-one, and Mary was only a few months turned of nineteen. This delay was annoying to the lovers, the more so as they must be separated so many months in the year, while Mark terminated his legal studies in town.

Mrs. Leslie encouraged them by quoting the opinion of the Vicar of Wakefield, that courtship is the happiest period of life, and in fact by dint of daily correspondence and frequent visits from Mark, they managed to get on very pleasantly. They and the whole family were truly happy.

Some months after the engagement which promised so well, the good old Abbé Moreau died; an event which was the first of a long series of troubles in Grove House.

CHAPTER II.

The person who came to fill the place of the late French Priest was the Rev. Arthur Powell, a native of Lancashire. He had straight black hair, black eyes, a sallow complexion and narrow visage: he had been bred at St. Omer; his deportment was grave, his manners were gentlemanly and quiet, his tones subdued, and his conversation never obtrusive, was full of general information, point and variety.

About the same time that Mr. Powell came to Grove Chapel, Oliver entered upon his living at Atherton, and it was agreed that till Mary's marriage, his sister should take it by turns each to keep house for him, while the other remained with her grand-mother. After Mary's marriage, the young couple were to live with Mrs.

Leslie and Alice with her brother. Oliver was very fond of both the girls, but Mary was certainly his favourite; he felt as every one about her did, the charm of her imaginative lively winningly wilful nature, and he held much to her passing with him in his new home a part of her time while she was still free.

Yet Alice was the first to go to Atherton, for with her quick perception of the feelings and wishes of others, she at once understood that Mary's thoughts were too much engaged on pleasanter subjects to be at leisure for the troublesome details of laying down carpets, hanging curtains, and all the etceteras attendant upon getting into a new home.

So she declared that she felt in herself a genius for arranging a house, that Atherton in some months was to be her own especial home, that she had a right to settle it in her own way, and insisted upon undertaking the task. She was vastly busy for some weeks, and only now and then found time to run over to the Grove for an hour or two. Her grand-mother and Mary more often went to see and cheer her in the midst of her labours.

At last her task came to an end, the vicarage was in pretty good order, and the time came which had been fixed for Mary to take her first turn at Atherton. The elder sister kept her engagement to Oliver, although Alice thought that it was rather a sacrifice; naturally considering that the post, which brought a daily letter from Mark to his betrothed, came in two hours later at Atherton than at Grove House. Alice made the observation and offered to stay altogether with Oliver, but Mary laughed, coloured, exclaimed: "nonsense," and would not hear of any change in the original plan.

By the time Alice took Mary's place at her grand-mother's, Mr. Powell was not only installed in all the clerical functions of the late Abbé Moreau, but in the same rights of hospitality at the Grove.

Mrs. Leslie by her very nature could not but be courteous to a guest, besides she respected in Mr. Powell a minister of the altar, nevertheless she agreed with Alice that the new Priest would never replace to them their good old lost friend. The young girl even took an unreasonable aversion to the present gentleman. His

eyes most frequently cast to the ground, except when now and then raised to dart a penetrating glance at some one, his studied intonations, his oily gentleness of manner, all, made her shrink within herself, and she remained distantly polite towards him, although he, with perfect propriety, tried all the ways of an accomplished man of the world to win her good will and confidence.

Mary, on the contrary, did not at all share in her sister's aversion to Mr. Powell, but entered freely into conversation when she happened to meet him, and (to Alice's great distress) would occasionally touch upon controverted points of religion.

One day when the discussion had been somewhat long and animated between the young lady and the Priest on a question of this kind, as soon as Mr. Powell left the room Alice could not refrain from saying :

"Really, Mary, it pains me to hear you descant on such subjects. By what right do you attack the religious tenets of any one? And surely talk of this kind with one of the clergy is especially

misplaced. From a young girl too it comes with particularly bad grace."

Mary much nettled, replied with quickness: "Thank you for your admonition, but general conversation cannot be regulated by your individual notions. I cannot see any necessity for sitting as you always do in Mr. Powell's presence, silent over your work, or venturing only a remark on the weather, or a question respecting the quantum of sugar and cream he prefers in his tea."

"Well! perhaps I expressed myself too sharply," answered Alice mildly, "I am very sorry if either by word or manner I hurt you. The truth is that I was sitting by for the last hour feeling very uncomfortable, for some of your observations, very clever and just in themselves, must, so it seemed to me, have wounded Mr. Powell."

"Oh! as to that," returned Mary, "Mr. Powell is quite able to defend his own positions, without your coming generously to his assistance. He has no objection to fair inquiry, and is indeed a man of much mind and deep learning."

In spite of these qualifications, which there was

no contesting, Mr. Powell was so displeasing to Alice, that she felt rejoiced when it was her turn to go back to Atherton.

Shortly after she walked to the Grove early, so as to breakfast with her grand-mother and Mary. She arrived at the very moment that the post came in bringing as usual a letter for her sister. As Mary read it, she coloured, bit her lips, and a slight frown passed over her brow.

"I wish," she exclaimed aloud to herself, "that Mark would not trifle in this way."

"What is the matter, Mary?" asked Mrs. Leslie. "What has he done to displease you?"

"Oh! nothing," replied Mary, "only he indulges in a tone of levity I do not like."

"Surely, my child, you cannot doubt the depth and seriousness of his affection," returned her grand-mother soothingly. "You have, I am sure, no real ground of jealousy."

"Jealousy!" exclaimed Mary, with heightened colour, and her most dignified look. "Grandmamma you ought to know me, and him too, better than to suppose such a thing of either of us. No.

What ruffled me was an indifference to a more serious subject. I mean religion."

"My darling Mary," replied her grand-mother very seriously, "respect that sanctuary in your betrothed husband's breast. Let me repeat to you the words our good Abbé Moreau often said to me. 'Do not presume to enter where alone the presence of God should shine.' It was by respecting this golden rule that your grand-father and I spent twenty-five happy peaceful years together in spite of our different worship, and I trust it will be the same with you and Mark. God bless you both."

Tears came into Mary's eyes, and she remained silent for a short time, but soon recovered her cheerfulness.

Alice concluded that Mrs. Leslie's advice had sunk into her sister's mind, for she remarked with silent satisfaction that Mary by degrees came entirely to abstain from theological discussion with Mr. Powell. At the same time frequent observation convinced her that, although her grandmother's personal liking for the Priest evidently did not increase, he was gradually gaining con-

siderable influence over her. She never appeared quite at ease in his presence, and when speaking would frequently glance towards him to see whether he approved or disapproved. Moreover she became much more strict than she had been hitherto in her religious practices, and carried fasting rather too far for a person getting into years, and whose health was delicate. At least so it struck Alice.

At last she confided these remarks to Mary, who answered that it was of course only right for grand-mamma to practice the religion she professed, and that Mr. Powell was so exemplary in his life, as well as stringent in his doctrine, that it was natural he should exercise a strong influence on his flock.

As these words fell from her sister's lips, this thought for the first time crossed the mind of Alice: "Is Mr. Powell converting her?" But she remembered her grand-mother's golden rule and held her peace. The suggestion having however once presented itself, rendered her more observant of many little things.

Thus it happened one day that the younger sister found the elder in the oak pannelled drawing-

room at Grove House, standing before some old family pictures, and so lost in thought that she did not hear the approaching step, till Alice stood beside her and made her start as she said laughing:

"Which of these ladies in hoops and starched frills, or of those gentlemen with flowing wigs and bright hilted swords, are you meditating about? Ah! I have it now. That Vandyke has really a great likeness to Mark."

"Yes—no. I cannot say," replied Mary in an abstracted way. "I was not thinking of that just now. Do you know, Alice, that Mr. Powell is very deep read in the local history of the county. He has told me a great deal of which I was ignorant about Grove House and about our ancestors. He has shewn me the passages in the authors from whom he has drawn these details. See the curly headed boy in that picture; when he came to man's estate he went into the church and was the last Abbot of N—— Abbey. And that lady in black was Canoness in a German chapter. She was our great aunt; and she was daughter of this lady dressed in the fashion of Louis the XIVth's time, who followed Queen Mary of

Modena to St. Germains. Ours is a very old Catholic family. I wonder how grand-mamma could condescend to marry a Protestant."

"My dear Mary!" exclaimed Alice in astonishment, "why, my grand-father was of very good family."

"Very true," answered Mary hastily, "yet it does seem,—now does it not? something like losing caste, for a Catholic lady to marry a Protestant."

"Well," returned her sister smiling, "you are now going to make up for that."

"Some things are not so easily made up for," answered Mary thoughtfully. "However, we still have the family blood in our veins," she added, drawing up her little fairy figure to its full height.

"Oh! Mr. Powell," thought Alice, "with those downcast searching eyes of yours, you have peered out one of my dear sister's weak points." But she did not utter this, or any other remark, and the two girls presently left the subject and the pictures, to go and seek their grand-mother in the garden.

In her own mind, however, Alice dwelt more

upon the foregoing conversation, than she might have done before she had been awakened to a possible hidden import in her sister's words. She watched Mary still more closely and tried from casual actions or unguarded speeches to draw some positive conclusion, but in vain. Purposely or not, Mary baffled all observation.

Alice thought it best to keep her floating surmises to herself, till one day, to her great surprise, she received the following letter from Mark.

"Something is wrong, very wrong, what it is I cannot tell, and of you, dear Alice, I entreat help to find out the truth.

An extraordinary change has been growing upon Mary for some time past. From affectionate, light-hearted, and confiding, which she used to be, she has become cold, reserved, and constrained. I have watched this growing metamorphosis with unutterable uneasiness. Each visit to the Grove confirms my impression. When I venture any observation of the kind to her, she assumes forced cheerfulness, or gives some irritable answer, invariably asserting that all is well with her, and that I am full of wayward fancies. If I touch

upon the subject in my letters, she generally rallies me as a dreamer, but of late she has more than once fallen into a tone, that evidently shews something weighing upon her mind. What is this mystery? Alice, remember that from childhood you and I have been as brother and sister, and come now to my assistance. You must be aware, at least in some measure, of what is going on. No concealment. I can bear any thing better than doubt and darkness. Have I a rival? For God's sake, tell me so at once if that is the fact. I must, I ought to know all. If Mary's love is gone from me, let her fear no reproach on my part. Our affections are involuntary, and God forbid that I should press for her hand without her heart.

Keep me not in suspense. Write *all.* I trust to your truthfulness, Alice, and to your old affection for Mark."

Alice hastened to pen a few lines, sufficient to set Mark's jealous fears completely at rest. It was a great happiness for her to feel, that each word she wrote, carried immediate relief to the evident torture of his mind. She then went on to

give him a detailed account of her own observations, and expressed her conviction that the secret, under which Mary was labouring, was a disposition to change her religion. It was indubitable, to the judgement of Alice, that a struggle was going on in Mary's mind on the subject, and that she entertained a strong tendency towards Catholicism. Alice added that Mark was the first person to whom she had confided these conjectures, and she felt it a relief to ask him whether he thought it right she should still remain silent on the subject with every one else.

Mark's answer began by an outburst of joy and gratitude at the receipt of her letter, which had lifted a deadly load from his heart. He added: "As to the other matter, you have done well to mention it to no one else. Mary will take remarks on the subject better from me than from you. When I come home I shall enter upon it with her, and I shall take good care to counteract the exaggerated influence which Mr. Powell seems to have acquired over her mind. She has shrunk from explaining herself to me, no doubt, because she is aware of my habitual dislike of conversions.

They seldom take place, it appears to me, but at a sacrifice, more or less, of intellectual or moral dignity. I am one of those Catholics, who believe that a sincere and virtuous Protestant is as near to God and salvation as one of the church of Rome. Moreover, in this peculiar case, I feel myself in honour bound towards Oliver, to guard my betrothed from Priestly influence. I trust I may be able to leave town in a few days, for I am anxious to put a stop at once to the effects of Mr. Powell's excessive zeal."

Mark's intention, however, of coming almost immediately to the Grove was frustrated by unexpected and very urgent business, relative to a law suit involving a considerable portion of his grandmother's property, which necessitated his assiduous presence in London.

Finding himself thus detained, yet reluctant to leave Mary to the unchecked approaches of Mr. Powell, Mark took occasion of a casual passage in one of her letters, laudatory of the Priest, to enter delicately into correspondence on the point he had so much at heart, taking care however not to allude to the communications received from

Alice. He bade Mary be on her guard against her avowed taste for theological disquisitions, or at all events to reserve her talents in that way for his (Mark's) benefit. "I am sure," he added, "that you have of late been bewildering your dear head on some of these abstruse questions; that explains the cold and misty tone of your letters which so pained me, for metaphysical controversy is a chilling fog, in which, for the love of me, I pray you dearest, do not lose yourself. Mr. Powell is a respectable, and a learned man, very well in his way, but I would not have you entangle yourself in the meshes of his arguments, generally more specious than fair. Wait at least till I come to lend a helping hand. The instant I have unravelled the web of law thrown over my grandmother's business, I shall be at your service to do as much by the theological webs which, I fear, you and Mr. Powell have been weaving. My darling Mary, let us love each other truly, be affectionate and kind to all around us, do all the good that comes in our way, and we shall fulfil the law and the prophets."

Things were in this state when Mrs. Leslie and Mary went to spend a morning with Alice; they found her reading a letter, which she at once handed to Mrs. Leslie saying: "Grand-mamma help me to write a proper and polite refusal."

Her grand-mother read the letter through twice and then said: "Consider, my dear child, before you decline this proposal. Mr. Avening, I must say, is a young man unexceptionable in every respect. Good husbands are not so plenty as young ladies imagine, and it is dangerous to play the coquette with modern lovers, they are apt to take a denial at once in good earnest. The days are long past, when a swain would patiently woo his fair one for seven long years, happy to soften her scorn at last."

"I have no idea of playing the coquette," replied Alice. "I simply wish to say 'no' to this offer, because I do not intend now, or seven years hence," she added laughing, "to marry Mr. Avening."

"Yet," said Mary, "you spoke very highly of him not three days ago."

"Quite true, I have a great esteem and value for him, but I do not feel that sort of affection, without which I could never think of marriage."

"And what sort of feeling has your romantic little brain imagined, as the indispensable ingredient of married life?" asked Mary rather sarcastically. "Where is the person you prefer to Mr. Avening?"

"I prefer," replied Alice warmly, "every one of my own family. I do not and I never could love Mr. Avening better than any body or any thing else in the world; as you love Mark for instance."

Mary blushed violently, and said with a mixture of pique and embarrassment: "Pray, little Alice, where did you get that plumb-line, with which to sound the hearts of others?"

Her sister did not answer this question, but turned to her grand-mother saying: "No, no, grand-mamma, I do not mean to marry Mr. Avening, nor any one. I shall just stay at home, play the maiden aunt to Mary's children, and pass my life between Atherton and Grove House.

"Well, after all," observed Mary thoughtfully,

"you may not be the worse of it, if you do carry out what nevertheless is, just now, a young lady's precarious project. They say, you know, there is no marrying or giving in marriage in Heaven."

Mrs. Leslie and her youngest grandaughter set to writing a proper rejection, while the elder girl fell into a deep fit of musing.

It was a week after this, that Mary reached her twenty-first birth day. A hearty kiss and hearty good wishes from each of her family, with a pretty ring sent down by Mark from town, were all the honours bestowed upon the anniversary that made her of age; for it was determined that all festivities should be reserved for the now approaching wedding. Mark expected to be free in a month from the tight trammels of the business, which still kept him prisoner in London, and in six weeks the marriage was to take place.

Mrs. Leslie and Oliver were Mary's guardians, and on the day after she reached her majority, they made her look over some accounts, sign some papers, and thus put her in possession of her property. Oliver claimed and readily obtained as his privilege, that Mary should spend with him

the last month before her marriage, and the end of the following week was fixed for her taking the place of Alice at Atherton.

In the mean time Mrs. Leslie and Alice were immersed in thoughts of wedding clothes and other preparations for the approaching event, while the bride elect held herself aloof from all such cares, and if applied to for her choice or opinion, always answered with a sort of maiden queen reserve, which had its peculiar, almost mysterious grace. "Do not ask me about these things, they are of your seeking." This only threw more entirely on her grand-mother and sister the awful responsibility of all such weighty matters.

A suggestion on one of these knotty points occured suddenly to Alice, one morning as she was dressing just three days before Mary was to come and stay at Atherton. So putting on her bonnet and shawl, and leaving word for her brother that she should not return to breakfast, she took her way across the fields to the Grove at an earlier hour than usual.

As she crossed the last meadow she overtook her grand-mother and Mary, who were following

leisurely the path leading from the chapel to their home. At sound of Alice's voice, they turned round surprised, and something even like embarrassment appeared in their looks. All three advanced together towards the house. Mrs. Leslie talked a good deal but in a rather flurried manner. Mary remained silent.

When she reached the drawing-room, she untied her bonnet, and threw it off complaining of the heat, then sitting down by her grand-mother, she said with determination:

"Grand-mamma, we may as well tell her at once."

"As you think right my love," answered Mrs. Leslie faintly.

"Well, Alice, what I have to tell you," resumed Mary, "is that I am a Catholic, and this morning I have been received into the bosom of our holy church."

"This is what I have almost expected for some time past," replied Alice very quietly.

"Why?" asked Mary quickly.

"I can hardly tell precisely, but I felt that it was so."

"I must say," observed Mary drawing a long breath, "that I am much relieved that you are not so astonished as I expected. Do you think my brother has any idea of the kind? Have you said any thing to him?"

"Not a word. I do not think he has the slightest notion of the sort."

All three remained silent; they felt strongly the difficulty of breaking the matter to Oliver. At length Alice looked up from the carpet upon which her eyes seemed to study the pattern, while with her parasol she traced its outline.

"I think I had better undertake the matter," she said.

Mary was evidently relieved by the proposal, and accepted it gratefully.

Alice remained some hours at the Grove, and when she departed, gave no outward expression or sign of the weight that pressed upon her heart; though it sunk within her more and more at every step as she walked home, pondering upon her undertaking, and upon the fact she had to reveal.

She waited till the next morning at breakfast, as the most propitious moment, and then ap-

proached the matter gradually, with so much preparatory caution, that for some time Oliver did not catch a meaning which was so remote from his thoughts. But the moment a glimpse of the truth flashed across his mind, he went straight to the point.

His grief, his astonishment, his indignation, knew no bounds and broke out in incoherent sentences.

"Mary a Catholic!—So this is what Mark promised!—True Catholic bad faith!"

Then in answer to a deprecatory observation from Alice. "Not his fault? Well, I believe it, though he is a papist. That atrocious Powell!" And Oliver paced furiously up and down the room. "This comes of allowing Catholic Priests in this country, our ancestors knew better."

Four or five more turns up and down the room. Alice waited in silence to let the first fury of the storm subside, but it burst forth afresh.

"Mary has renounced her religion! Well then, I disclaim her for a sister!"

"Oh, Oliver! even in a first moment of anger, you ought not to say such a thing."

"No remonstrance, Alice, it is of no use, I renounce her, she is no longer a sister of mine. Never shall she set foot in this house. Do you think I will submit to such a scandal, to have my sister, a papist, staying in my home, and going from a Protestant vicarage to attend mass? No, no, in the present unsettled state of many minds, with the tendency of so many towards popery, never shall a Catholic sister of mine come within these doors; that Mary may rest assured of. I shall write her my mind this moment. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out."

And he rose to go to his study. The word or two Alice had hitherto attempted to put in, had only furnished fuel to his anger, but now it seemed spent and she seized the opportunity.

"Write whatever you judge fit," she said, "only grant me one request. Promise me you will not send off your letter before to-morrow."

"And why so?"

"A day's reflexion is not too much before you commit an unchristian act."

"How an unchristian act? Are you going to turn Catholic, Alice?"

"Very far from it; but have you not yourself said long ago, that liberty of conscience is the vital principle of Protestantism?"

"Very true, but there is a limit to all things, and this goes beyond the bounds of endurance. My sister a papist! Let me tell you, Alice, that if England were to become Catholic, the liberty of conscience you talk of, would have no place in the world. However, to gratify you, I will not write till to-morrow, though I shall not change what I say."

Alice was satisfied with this concession, for she felt sure, though she took care not to say so, that twenty-four hours for consideration would very much modify Oliver's state of mind. She merely said gently: "At all events, I thank you for doing what I ask."

She was about to leave the room, when a slight rustling without drew the attention of the brother and sister to the open window, near which they stood, and there they beheld Mary.

Her attitude was dignified, and addressing Oliver she said: "You may spare yourself the trouble of writing either to-day or to-morrow.

Your loud voice brought your words to my ear as I came over the grass-plot. Be not uneasy, Oliver, depend upon it that I shall never cross your threshold; I here shake the dust from my feet, and leave you to the undisturbed contemplation of Protestant toleration."

So saying she turned away and was beyond the garden gate in a moment.

Oliver stood transfixed. Alice snatched her bonnet and shawl, and rushed after Mary, whom she overtook already half way to the Grove.

While one sister was recovering her spent breath, the other poured out the indignation of a proud spirit up in arms. Mary also explained that, having considered that it was neither just nor generous in her, to leave to Alice the whole weight of making a disagreeable communication to their brother, she had risen that morning with the determination of taking at least her share of what might be unpleasant. Oliver's raised tones had struck her as she entered the precincts of the vicarage, "and conveyed to me," she added "the touching proof of Protestant brotherly

love." And there was a thrilling sneer in the young girl's voice.

As soon as Alice could speak, she tried to moderate her sister's resentment, by representing Oliver's conduct as the passing outbreak of a hasty temper.

Thus discussing they reached the Grove, and sought Mrs. Leslie to recount what had happened.

"Grand-mamma, my brother has turned me from his door," exclaimed Mary, for the first time giving way to tears.

Alice explained more calmly to her grandmother what had occurred, and they both endeavoured to soothe the feelings of the agitated girl.

"Compose yourself, my darling," said Mrs. Leslie, "this has been a very trying scene for you, but you know that Oliver speedily repents when he has been betrayed into unkindness. Besides, if he were to persist in shutting his house and heart to you, (which he will not) my home and my heart are ever open to you," and she folded her grandaughter in her arms. "Re-

member too that you will soon be the wedded heiress and mistress of the Grove."

Mary raised her head from her grand-mother's shoulder; she had ceased weeping. "I will go to my own room now, and return to you presently, grand-mamma," she said, and left the parlour followed by Alice.

As they crossed the hall, to their great surprise they met Mark, who was not expected for a month.

Just arrived by the rail-road, he hastened towards the two girls with joyous looks and hands extended, but Mary exclaiming: "Good Heavens, Mark! Then my letter missed you," pushed him aside, and ran up stairs.

CHAPTER III.

MARK stood in mute and scared wonder, but a few words from Alice explained Mary's newly declared conversion and the consequent quarrel at Atherton; this sufficiently accounted for her agitation.

"You are always my comforter, Alice," said Mark throwing his arms round her neck. "But what a shock she gave me. What you tell me of Mary and Oliver is certainly very distressing, yet I cannot just now feel sorry at any thing, I am so relieved. Let us go to my grand-mother."

The old lady was delighted at the unlooked for appearance of her grandson, and the motive which brought him was not less welcome. He explained that the hearing of the cause concerning his grand-mother's property had come on sooner than

supposed, the decision was in favour of Mrs. Leslie and Mark had set out the next morning to bring himself the good news, over which all three now heartily rejoiced.

Ten minutes had not elapsed in such talk, when Mary came in, looking very pale.

Mark went up to her tenderly and uttered some soothing words with respect to Oliver's conduct, but, waiving him away, she advanced straight to her grand-mother and began:

"Grand-mamma, you said just now that your heart would always be open to me, but I have something to tell you, which will perhaps induce you to withdraw your love from me, although, no doubt, you will not express it brutally as Oliver did. You have thought of me as of the future wife of Mark. Know that henceforth you must look upon me as a chosen spouse of Christ. I destine myself to the cloister, and my fortune to the endowment of a Convent."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mark staggering, like a man under the impulsion of a blow; an expression of incredulity, struggling with terror, glaring in his eyes.

The grand-mother's smothered inarticulate cry, was dreadful to hear, but recovering her voice a moment after, she said: "Send for Mr. Powell, he will never suffer such an act."

"Yes, yes," responded Mark, "Mr. Powell shall come, I will have him here presently." And he started from the chair into which he had sunk. His tone frightened Mary.

"Mark, you will not insult a minister of God!" she faltered out.

Alice laid her hand upon Mark's arm, and pressed him down to his seat.

"You shall not go, Mark. *I* will write a few lines to request Mr. Powell's immediate presence on urgent business."

A self possessed person generally obtains the direction of those who are under strong agitation. Alice was allowed to do as she proposed. She penned a short note and sent it off by a servant.

"Good God!" cried Mark, breaking first a painful silence, "this then is what awaited my return which I pictured so happy! So you studiously kept me in the dark, to strike the deadly blow unawares!"

Mary defended herself from this accusation, though rather confusedly, by stating that she had, that very day, put a letter in the post which explained all. Mark must remember he was not expected at home for a month. "I never meant," added she, "that the shock should come upon you so suddenly."

"You wrote then to prepare me to break off our marriage?"

"I did."

"Oh, Alice! my prophetic fears! You would not believe them," he exclaimed, turning to the younger sister. "You must see it now as I do. Evidently she loves another man. I understand you now, Mary. You are seeking refuge in a cloister from the struggle between a past and a present love. For God's sake, give up such a thought. You are free, Mary, free as air. Your promise to me, poor girl, was unconsciously cancelled the day another affection crept into your heart. Never will I ever allude to a word become meaningless between us. Only, no more concealment. I deserve your confidence and that alone I implore."

"This is too solemn a moment for disguise," replied Mary. "Heaven is my witness, Mark, that I have loved you truly, not one thought has ever strayed to any other mortal man; but since my eyes have been opened to the holy truth of the Catholic faith, an immortal love has filled my heart."

"The law of our church forbids not, but sanctions our earthly affections," returned Mark eagerly. "If you have come into the church in which I was bred, is that not rather a new tie between us?"

"Alas! Mark, yours is a lukewarm faith, and this alone would have been a source of sorrow and disunion between us. Things might have been otherwise, had I too been reared up in your church, my influence would perhaps have drawn you from your apathetic indifference. But I have other and still more pressing thoughts to dwell upon. For long years I have lived in heresy, my brother and my sister are even now, what we were all brought up to be, heretics."

"Oh! Mary, what a cruel reproach to me," cried Mrs. Leslie.

Alice went and sat down by her grand-mother, took her hand tenderly, passing the other arm round her neck, thus exercising the silent magnetism of a caress.

"You did what you thought best," continued Mary in a softened tone. "Not on you lies the blame, but on others, God rest their souls. Error engenders error, and now for two generations our race have deserted the true faith, to which God has been so mercifully pleased to recall me. But as I said, my brother and my sister still live, my father and my mother died out of the pale of salvation. Providence has perhaps marked me to work out by prayer, sacrifice, and mortification, the expiation of sin for the living and the dead. For the errors too into which you may have been led, I may make atonement."

"This is the raving of the wildest fanaticism!" exclaimed Mark. "For Heaven's sake. Mary, throw off this horrid night mare, and wake to your former self, to your own pure and holy affections. Consider what you are to me; think what we have been to each other from childhood, how our

hearts and minds have twined together till this cruel blight fell on yours."

"You will judge otherwise, when passion no longer blinds you," returned Mary, "my mind, thank God, has been enlightened, and my heart touched by heavenly grace. What is the sacrifice of a mere perishable affection to the immortal interests of not only my own soul, but of those of all my family. A few years of penitence, and I trust we may all meet in glory."

"You take the phantoms of a heated imagination for substance," cried Mark impatiently.

"I have spoken my thoughts to those who could best judge of them."

"A little time, my dear Mary, and these exaggerations of a new conversion will disappear."

"So Mr. Powell thought at first; now he recognises a real vocation."

"Mr. Powell shall speak for himself," said Mark sharply, rising and pacing the room restlessly. "But what Mr. Powell will not tell you, I will; that it is an awful thing to fling from you a man who has loved and trusted, and whose

heart roots are twined round you. I will tell you to consider before you thus break a human soul to pieces upon the rack of despair." Then after a pause he exclaimed: "How could this Priest get such a hold of your mind?"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Leslie wringing her hands, "Oh! that I had told you, Mark, the moment I knew he had Mary's conversion in view! Little did I think it would ever come to this. You might have seen more clearly."

"I too," said Alice, "ought perhaps to have spoken sooner."

Mark sought to put aside these useless self-reproaches, and then resumed his impatient walk up and down the room till the Priest came.

Mr. Powell entered with his usual deliberate step, and modest carriage and bow.

"Ladies your most obedient," he said, casting one glance around, which seemed to take in the whole group, and the passions agitating each individual; his colour rose slightly, and an almost imperceptible twitch of the mouth seemed to prepare for struggle.

Three voices burst out at once.

"Mr. Powell, help me!" cried Mary,

"Oh, Mr. Powell!" exclaimed Mrs. Leslie passionately; "how you have deceived me! You never hinted at this dreadful project of Mary's; you knew that I would never have lent my aid to it. Rather a thousand times she had remained as she was."

"Sir," broke out Mark, "you have to render me an account of my affianced bride, and of the influence you exercise on a young and ardent mind."

The Priest took a chair calmly, and in an unruffled voice said: "Allow me to answer each in succession."

Then addressing himself to Mrs. Leslie in a mild compassionate tone, he observed: "Divine mercy will no doubt be extended to the momentary weakness of the flesh, which can prefer human affections to holy truth. A little reflection, my daughter, will, I am persuaded, bring back the erring heart on that point. *Justus peccat septies.* (A just man faileth seven times). As to your accusation against myself of deceit, I receive it as a mortification, which no doubt I have deserved

for other sins, but beware of hasty judgments. Know you not that confession is sacred, on many points my lips are sealed."

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me!" said Mrs. Leslie bowing her head between her hands, "sinful creature that I am, but oh! excellent Mr. Powell, do not send Mary into a convent."

"Does Miss Leslie say?" asked Mr. Powell, suddenly turning to Mark, "that it is I who induced her to take this resolution?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Mary vehemently, "I told him it was an inspiration of my own mind, a special vocation, which you yourself began by combating. But he will not hear, he will not believe."

"I will not, and I cannot believe," said Mark, "that Mary would break her faith to me, that a gentle young creature could tear up by the roots all her strongest and purest affections, would deliberately break the heart of her affianced husband, her grand-mother, her brother and sister, unless blinded by bigoted suggestions and guided by a nefarious influence. It is you, and you alone, Sir, who are responsible for this."

"He does not know what he utters; do not listen to his horrid expressions," cried Mary. "How right you were, Mr. Powell; it is far more easy to plan than to execute."

"My daughter, you have probably confided too much in your own strength. Perhaps you have not laid your aspirations before those more competent to judge of the impediments that lay in your way, or to throw light on your steps." Then turning again to Mark: "Is Miss Leslie's resolution quite new to you, Sir?"

"It has fallen upon me like a thunder bolt. Do you suppose that I should have remained quietly at a distance, if I had had the remotest suspicion of the kind?"

"How has this happened?" asked Mr. Powell of Mary.

"By the most unforseen, the most unfortunate chance. Mark was not expected for a month; and this very morning I put into the post a letter for him, which crossed him on the road. So strong, so frank was the appeal I therein made, that I thought myself sure of his concurrence."

"My concurrence, Mary!" exclaimed Mark reproachfully.

"Well," observed the Priest, "it is to be regretted that your friends should have become so suddenly apprised of a wish, deeply rooted in your mind, which was likely to meet with opposition from them. Some preparation was due to them, especially under the peculiar circumstances, absolutely due to your family."

"I have often, in my late correspondence with Mark, hinted at certain changes working within me, and he has more than once evinced uneasiness on the subject. I hoped he might gradually be led to guess my meaning. In not more entirely expressing my plans, I only followed your wise caution not to believe too hastily my own vocation, or ensnare myself by prematurely giving out my intention."

"Does this look like bigoted suggestions or exercising a nefarious influence?" said the Priest with a resentful glance towards Mark.

"I still repeat—" began the latter.

"I beg one moment's further patience," interrupted Mr. Powell. "Miss Leslie," addressing

Mary, "past mischances we cannot recall, but I enjoin you now to open your mind frankly to your family. The time is fully come to lay your wishes before them, and to ask the consent of those, who still have a moral, if not a legal right to direct your actions."

"Then," said Mary in a firm full voice, "from the motives which you, Mr. Powell, knew, and which I have to-day explained fully to all here, I declare that my deliberate intention is to devote myself to the service of God, and my property to the founding of a convent. I here ask my grandmother's approval with her blessing, as well as my cousin's consent and forgiveness."

"Never, never!" exclaimed both Mrs. Leslie and Mark in a breath.

"Mary, my own Mary," continued Mark. "do you not see through this flimsy artifice? Can you fall into the snare blind-folded? The wily Priest has made you wait till you were of age, that you might have the legal disposal of your property, and he sacrifices you and me, and the holy affection that bound us to each other, for the purpose of enriching his voracious church."

"Mark," replied Mary blushing with indignation, "I did not suspect you of such vulgar sentiments, or such sordid views."

"This from my promised wife," cried Mark, "the canker has indeed eaten deep into your soul! Perish your fortune, but give me back your confidence and love. Listen to me, Mary, here is a way to remove all difficulties, the mere expression of your wish on this point is sacred to me. Devote your fortune to found a convent, or to any other charity you may choose. I respect your pious motives, and I will add my mite, a thousand pounds, to your donation. Mr. Powell shall have the dispensing of the whole according to your views. We shall still have enough to live on in love and happiness. Will this not satisfy you, Mary? Will this not content you, reverend Sir?" he added with some remaining bitterness, turning to Mr. Powell.

"No, Mr. Bevan," retorted the Priest, pale with suppressed resentment, and rising from his chair. "This offer, made in the spirit in which you make it, not only is no amends, but is an aggravation to the insult you have dared to hurl

against our holy church. My heart bleeds at the fact that such words have been uttered, not by a blind heretic, but by one of my own flock."

Mrs. Leslie groaned aloud, and Mary sat trembling from head to foot.

"Young man," continued Mr. Powell in a calmer voice, "I sincerely forgive any offensive innuendoes directed against myself, in the anger of disappointed passion, but it is my duty to vindicate the dignity of my church, and to turn away every shadow of scandal from the altar."

He drew forth his pocket book, opened it deliberately, and taking thence a paper, held it towards Mary.

"Two days ago, Miss Leslie, in your eagerness to begin a work of charity, you put into my hands this order on your banker. I now restore it to you, lest your family should consider it either unworthily obtained or unwisely appropriated."

"No, no," answered the young girl, I insist that you keep it."

"That may not be," said the Priest, and with his usual quiet step he went to Mark, held the paper before him so that he should take exact

cognizance of it, then as quietly moved to the chimney and threw the paper into the fire.

Mary cast a look of blighting reproach and triumph at Mark.

Then Mr. Powell reseating himself turned to Mrs. Leslie:

"Am I to understand that you still deliberately withhold your consent to the desire, which Miss Leslie has expressed?"

"Pray, pray," replied the poor old lady, "do not press me beyond the limit of my strength." "I cannot consent," she added bursting into tears, "to the misery of my grandson."

"Never shall you extort from me my consent," cried Mark with increasing passion.

"And, never will I—" began Mary vehemently.

"Stop, my child," interrupted the Priest. "No hasty resolves, no proud self-will. You owe obedience to those whom God has placed over you. Your worthy grand-mother ought to decide upon the disposal of her grandaughter. She does not consent to the aspirations you have rashly entertained without her knowledge, a former promise has given to your cousin a right to your hand which he seeks to enforce."

"I beg pardon, Mr. Powell," interrupted Mark hastily, "I must stop you at that word '*enforce*,' which you invidiously throw out and which is quite foreign to my feeling. I simply urge upon my cousin, that if her affections are still mine (and understand clearly, Mr. Powell, that she assures me she has bestowed them on no one else), it is an aberration of mind, to break off her marriage with me because she has entered the church to which I belong. Nor can you deny that there is not the slightest necessary connexion between the fact of Mary becoming a Catholic, and this wild notion of her taking the veil. The two things are perfectly independant of each other."

"A very just remark," answered Mr. Powell calmly.

Mrs. Leslie looked up with a flash of satisfaction.

"That the stray lamb has returned to the fold," continued the Priest, "does not imply any change in worldly prospects, as matters stand. Yet allow me to observe, that it is scarcely seemly to term aberration of mind, the aspiration of a newly sanctified spirit, to obtain, by sacrifice and penitence, remission for the souls of beloved kindred

erring in heresy. But to enter the secure and holy path of monastic life, is not a favour granted to all, and I agree with you that Miss Leslie's road seems marked by Providence through the slippery thorny paths of the world."

"Oh! Mr. Powell!" exclaimed Mary, "Do you thus desert me in the very hour of trial? After all we have said on the doctrine of sacrifice, do you now give your support to its opponents in practice?"

"You shall ever have my prayers, my daughter," returned the Priest very gently. "And do not erroneously suppose that to take the veil is the only meritorious sacrifice you can make. Other offerings may be as bitter to the creature, and as grateful to the Creator: the spirit of sacrifice is in every shape acceptable to God. Your own heart pointed to the calm of a religious seclusion, to the erection of a pious edifice, to the restoration of the ancient Catholic splendour of your family. Well! these hopes and wishes you are called upon to renounce. Look upon this as a mortification, and accept it with an humble mind. Obey your grand-mother; fulfil your former promise to your

cousin and your duties as a wife. May God grant his holy peace to this house!"

With these last words Mr. Powell rose to depart.

"Your superiors, Sir, you may depend upon it," said Mark goaded by Mr. Powell's insidious moderation, "shall know how you have worked to secure to us that blessing, and how you use the influence you obtain in families. It is such things as this, that bring discredit on our religion and on her ministers."

Mr. Powell had reached the door, he turned with a look of concentrated resentment, and said: "I shall know how to humble myself before the judgment of my superiors, if they reprove or correct me. May you, young man, know as well how to bend your spirit to the chastisements, which Providence may have in store for you. I think I already see," he added, glancing at Mary, "that you have roused a spirit you fain would give worlds to lay." And he left the room.

The Priest had no sooner shut the door, than Mark went up to Mary, and holding out his hand, said: "If any words have escaped me in the warmth of my feelings, which have wounded you,

I repent and retract the expression. Think only what the trial has been, and you will forgive me. Had you loved another, I would have resigned you to him without reproach or lamentation, though I might have died; but to give you up to the cold walls of a convent, this you must not, cannot require. My dear, dear Mary, only tell me you do not misunderstand me.

"I will tell you," returned Mary, "that I blush for you, Mark. You think that you have achieved a victory; it is an ignoble one at any rate."

And with this the young girl swept indignantly out of the parlour, and went up to her own room.

The rest remained looking at each other without speaking, in a painful state which may be compared to that of ships tossed by a heavy swell after a storm, till a servant entered and put a note written in pencil into Alice's hand. It was from Oliver.

"How very, very wrong I have been! how unchristian, as you truly said, dear Alice. Pray do try and make my peace with Mary, for her repentant brother.

P.S. I am waiting at the back garden gate."

Alice had forgotten all about Oliver, and that which would have been so welcome an hour before, seemed now of very secondary importance. Still the incident broke the spell that lay upon the three who sat in the parlour.

Alice communicated the note to her grandmother, and to Mark, and then ran out to fetch in Oliver. In two minutes he was told what had happened. He looked aghast, and required some little time to grasp a full comprehension of what he heard. At last, recovering himself and drawing a long breath, he exclaimed:

"Well! that we have escaped this danger, is a mercy and a signal favour, for which humbly to thank Providence. And to think that by my ungenerous want of forbearance I was perhaps helping to drive her on to this desperate resolution!"

"Now," said Alice, "I will go up to Mary and do my best for you, Oliver."

Mary received the conciliatory opening from her brother more eagerly than her sister had expected.

"Poor Oliver," she exclaimed, "he has a good heart. We are all so apt to go wrong, we ought

to be indulgent." And she spontaneously returned to the parlour with Alice, and walked straight up to Oliver, holding out her hand.

"Oh dear, good little Mary," cried he, "so you really forgive me, after I have behaved so very ill."

"Never mind, Oliver," returned she, "forgive and forget, you know."

"And will you," looking half afraid, "will you go home with me and stay as you promised, before I was such a savage?"

"Oh, yes," unhesitatingly answered Mary, and her eyes beamed.

"Well then," said he with a quick sense of the best thing to do, that every one might have time to recover the late shock, "I cannot rest till I get you to Atherton. Let us be off. Alice can send your things and your maid this afternoon. My gig is at the gate."

Mary consented, ran up stairs for her bonnet and shawl and returned immediately.

As she moved to depart, Mark came forward:

"Will you not give me a sign of forgiveness before you go, Mary?"

"To be sure," cried Oliver gaily, "Let by-gones be by-gones, as the Scotch say, I am so very happy that my little sister has made it up with me, that nobody must remain in disgrace, so kiss and be friends." As he uttered the last words, he put an arm round the neck of each, drawing their heads rather roughly together.

Mary could not help laughing, while rubbing her forehead which had come in somewhat hard contact with Mark's. "Oh! Oliver," said she, "you are always the same."

"Aye, aye, true blue to be sure. Well now let us begone. And you, good people," turning to the rest of the party, "come and dine with us to-morrow," eh? my little house-keeper, "shall we not shew them the best hospitality of the vicarage?"

"Oh, yes!" put in Mary, so called upon. "Come to-morrow."

"To-morrow then, at five, remember," said Oliver as he closed the door, and hastened away with Mary under his arm.

The emotions of the morning left the party that remained far from calm, but by degrees they talked themselves into something like serenity.

Alice especially tried to raise the spirits of the other two, and in so doing found relief for the misgivings and despondency, which fluttered painfully in her own heart.

A night's rest, though not unbroken by anxiety, proved a useful sedative, and a bright spring sun shone on the morning, as if to revive body and mind.

Minutes and hours never stand still, so on this day they slipped by, though listlessly, and brought the time for walking to Atherton.

As Mrs. Leslie and her grand-children entered the village, they met Oliver who had been visiting some sick. He was in high spirits.

"All right," said he, "she is quite cheerful and affectionate, bless her. We have avoided forbidden subjects, and found plenty others. All is going on as beautiful as you could wish, Mark, with your betrothed." So saying he opened the garden gate, led the way across the lawn to the drawing-room window, and looked in, but she was not there.

"Oh! I know," said Alice, "she is very fond of the shrubbery, she is there I dare say."

To the shrubbery all went, but no Mary. They then entered the house and called her. As they received no answer, Oliver said she must have gone to meet the party and missed them. Which way had they come?

By the road.

Aye. She expected them by the fields. She would be in presently. And they tried to talk of other things. Presently Alice went up stairs to carry her grand-mother's and her own bonnet into Mary's room. An unaccountable weight lay at heart.

As she entered the apartment she was struck by a certain appearance of disorder, which made her gasp for breath. She rapidly examined the drawers and the closet, ran to the door and called aloud for Betsy, Mary's maid; receiving no answer, she went to the girl's room. A glance confirmed her fears. Mary and the maid were gone.

She sprung down stairs and gave the alarm. All rushed to examine the rooms, and then made the house and garden vainly ring with the names of Mary and Betsy. Doubt was no longer possible.

"The Priest has spirited her away," cried Oliver.

"Let us go to him instantly," returned Mark. And the two young men ran off together towards Mr. Powell's house.

He was not at home. A young Priest, who habitually filled his place during any occasional absence, was there, but could only reply to the pressing questions of the two gentlemen, that Mr. Powell had gone, that morning early, to preach a charity sermon at M——, a town ten miles distant, and that his return was not expected for two or three days.

This unsatisfactory answer was communicated to Alice and Mrs. Leslie on the return of the young men, just while they were waiting to have the horse put to Oliver's gig, then without another moment's delay they drove off to M——. When they arrived at that town, Mr. Powell, after having delivered his sermon, had left three hours previous, in company with two other Priests, on a walking tour of three or four days; their intended route could not be precisely pointed out, all the Priest could say was, that the party intended to return to Winterford by a long round through the hill country.

Thus thrown out of any certain track, the two friends after consultation, saw nothing better to do than to return, and they consequently arrived at the Grove at midnight, worn and bewildered.

In the mean time Alice had remained with her grand-mother. Poor Mrs. Leslie! how she wrung her hands and wept, and cried upon her lost Mary! Where could she be? What would befal her? Oh! how could she leave her poor grand-mother thus?

"How indeed;" thought Alice, "as she stifled her own emotions, and tried to compose the alarming violence of those she witnessed." Oh, Mary, if you could have seen this in fancy, you would never have done what you have done.

With great difficulty Alice brought Mrs. Leslie to a state, which could allow of her return home. When she was in some degree calmed, her grand-daughter sent for the carriage, and they went to the Grove, where it had been agreed with Mark and Oliver that all should repair. They were too wretched to separate. And then the old lady and the young girl sat up waiting for the young men, who came, as we said, after midnight, bringing no comforting intelligence.

Alice had dispatched servants to make inquiries in various directions in the neighbourhood, but had obtained no information.

She suggested to the still more bitterly disappointed travellers, that it was perhaps not so great a misfortune after all, not to have met with Mr. Powell; the interview would have inevitably given rise to an outbreak, which would have still further alienated Mary. And the Priest, even if he knew, would have taken care not to say where she was. Alice thought that, by patiently continuing a search in the neighbourhood, they must find some trace. She remarked also that the circumstance of Mary's having taken her maid with her, removed the most appalling apprehension, which, had she been alone, her disappearance might have suggested.

With such reflections, after having persuaded the travellers to take some refreshment, she got them to retire to rest with as much calm as the situation could admit.

Very early next morning Alice began herself to make inquiries among the neighbours. Two cottagers said that they had seen Miss Leslie, on

the preceding day, walking with her maid towards Winterford. Some time was wasted in trying to follow up this clue, which soon utterly failed.

After breakfast, she again sallied forth in another direction, while Oliver and Mark went each separate ways. Alice was the first to hear that the fugitives had been perceived, the maid carrying a bag, going along a road, which led in an opposite direction from Winterford, to the nearest rail-road station. She rushed home with this intelligence, which she had hardly uttered, when it was confirmed by the report of Oliver, who had that moment learned the same thing.

They instantly hurried off to the station with Mark, whom they met by the way. But here all further information ceased. The man, who delivered the tickets, was new to the post and to the country. He had seen many ladies with maids and bags. Some had gone by the up, and some by the down, and some by the branch trains. Telegraphic despatches sent in all directions produced no more satisfactory result; no possible mode of inquiry was neglected, but all in vain, and the family were at length obliged to sit down in helpless dreary suspense.

CHAPTER IV.

THE third day after Mary's disappearance, as the melancholy party met round the breakfast table, a letter was brought to Alice.

"From Mary!" she exclaimed, then tore it open and read aloud, while the rest grouped themselves around her to drink in the words with eye as well as ear. They ran thus:—

"DEAR ALICE,

"I am afraid grand-mamma is very angry with me, and I am very angry with Mark, so I write to you who are always a peace-maker. I do not wish any one to be more uneasy about me than necessary. I and Betsy, are in London in respectable lodgings by ourselves.

"London is a large place, where it is impossible to find me unless I choose, and I do not choose it.

"I speak out quite plain. No one shall ever say again that I conceal my intentions; no one shall accuse the venerable Mr. Powell of guiding me by a *nefarious influence*. Alice, those were Mark's words.

"Be it known to all that I am acting entirely out of my own head, I do so from my own inspiration, and therefore very likely all wrong. But right or wrong, I alone am responsible for my conduct.

"I have no guide, no adviser; I am alone and very helpless.

"After what passed at the Grove, Mr. Powell very properly declines the office of my Confessor, not from resentment, he is far above that, and extends Christian forgiveness to all, but he refuses inexorably any further advice or direction in my affairs, or pointing out any other spiritual director. My family, he observed, would look upon his substituting any other to himself as a mere subterfuge.

"Truly they would be very likely to do so. I could not sleep a wink the night I passed at

Atherton; the scene of the morning haunted me like a night-mare. I rose with the dawn and walked to Grove Chapel, for I could not rest without humbling myself at the feet of the holy Priest for the insults, to which he had been exposed from my kindred. How benignantly he raised me, with the meekest expression of charity. Beyond that, I could obtain nothing, but the same injunction he had laid upon me the day before, to submit in all things to the direction of my family. It behoved him to retire absolutely from all further interference in my concerns.

"All this is owing to Mark, and no one but he is responsible for the consequences.

"In what a tumult of mind did I take my way back to Atherton! At last it suddenly flashed into my thoughts to do as I have done, and my determination was taken at once. You were all coming to dinner. I could not stand that. My plan grew distinct in my head, and then I became calm.

"It was still early, when Oliver came from his study to the breakfast-room, no doubt he

thought I had just been visiting the flowers in the garden.

"He talked a great deal which spared me effort; he was in high spirits, poor fellow, and I felt sorry for him.

"After breakfast I went into my room and made a few arrangements. The train I meant to take was not to pass till two hours before our dinner hour. Oliver I knew had business in the village about that time.

"I did not summon my maid till very shortly before starting, then I told her to put up a small parcel of necessaries for herself, with mine which were already in a carpet bag, saying that I wanted to surprise you all, that I was going up to London and would furnish her there with all she could want. Betsy was astonished, scared, would have asked questions, but I hurried her off before she could recover herself, telling her it was her duty to obey me. We slipped out unperceived, followed the road to Winterford for some time, so that no one who might meet us should guess our real direction, and then crossed the fields to the way

leading to the station! I enter into these details to exonerate every one from the unjust suspicion of having had any thing to do with the step I have spontaneously and deliberately taken.

"I am perfectly aware that it is not very fitting for Mrs. Leslie's grand-daughter to be wandering about the world, or living in apartments in London, with no better protection than that of an ignorant country lady's maid.

"There is, however, but one way of getting me out of this situation, and that depends upon my grand-mother and Mark.

"I have made a vow to go a pilgrimage to a certain shrine. Near that shrine dwell holy women fit to give protection to any lady in the land. With them I wish to remain some time, and it is my earnest desire to go properly attended and recommended.

"Where the place is, I do not tell you, because I do not wish you to know.

"Mr. Powell can give me the introductions and the directions I want, but he never will do so, I know, unless not only authorised, but specially requested by my family.

"Now, what I implore of my grand-mother as a proof of her forgiveness, and what I ask of Mark as some atonement for his conduct towards Mr. Powell, and I will add as a conciliatory kindness to me, is to request of that holy Priest to give me the instructions, I am about to ask of him by letter. Mark shall have some days to overcome his pride.

"Grand-mamma is too good, too tender, too pious, to refuse me this, my earnest prayer. And surely Mark's generous nature cannot deliberately mistake persecution for love. If he acts as becomes him in complying with my wish, he will leave me the soothing consciousness, that my strongest earthly affection was not unworthily placed. He shall have not only my forgiveness, but my affectionate blessings and prayers shall attend him.

"Alice, obtain for me the boon I ask like the good kind sister you have ever been. I am sure you feel for your distressed, loving

"MARY."

After reading this letter, they all looked at each other in silence for some minutes.

"At all events it is a great comfort to hear from her," said Alice drawing a long breath.

"What shall we do?" asked Mrs. Leslie.

"Oliver and I will run up to London," returned Mark, "and it will go hard if we do not manage to find her, though she fancies it so impossible, dear simple girl."

"To be sure," added Oliver, "we will search London through and through, before we will knock under to that Priest."

"We really must talk with Mary about these strange mysterious plans. A little reflection will shew her that she cannot require us to consent to, and authorise we do not know what," observed Mark. He looked at his watch. "We have just time, Oliver, to catch the second train," continued he. "Let us be off."

And away the two young men went, promising to report progress by every post, and send a telegraphic despatch the moment they discovered a trace of the fugitive.

Day after day the expected letter came, without bringing any tidings of Mary. The most active and persevering search had hitherto proved vain.

Day after day Mrs. Leslie's anxiety increased, and that of Alice was doubled by all she felt for her grand-mother, who no longer possessed the strength of her younger times to resist the present severe trial, and whose health was evidently giving way.

Her nights were sleepless, and increasing weakness obliged her to keep her bed. Her days spent in fits of passionate tears, or anxious watching for a letter, a telegraphic despatch or an arrival. Mary's letter ever lay open before her. She was pursued by a nervous feeling, that if she were on the spot with her grand-sons, she might do or suggest something useful. This restlessness became so strong, that Alice wrote to the young men, that if they were to be detained in London by their search, the only thing to do was for her grand-mother and herself to join them.

This letter brought Mark down to the Grove, leaving Oliver still to continue the now almost hopeless inquiries in Town. He was shocked at the ravage a few days had made in his grandmother's appearance; she had aged at least ten years.

There was but one subject to talk of, and poor Mrs. Leslie wept abundantly as she sat up in her bed, gazing upon Mark's disconsolate face and listened to the fruitless details of his journey.

"There is one way still, Mark," said she at last in a hesitating voice, glancing towards Mary's letter and then fixing her eyes on her grandson with an imploring look.

Mark could not resist the appeal. "Grandmother, write what you will to Mr. Powell, I will sign with you."

Mrs. Leslie asked Alice for her blotting book and wrote at once :

"Reverend Sir,

"I inclose my poor Mary's letter, and not only I authorise you fully, but I entreat you to give her all the directions and assistance of which she stands so much in need.

"Pray, pray, restore her to us.

"Anna Leslie."

Mark ran his eyes over the note, and put his signature, without uttering a word, under that of his grand-mother's, and returned the paper to her.

She folded and directed the letter and desired Alice to despatch it.

A short time after Mark went out to cool his hot forehead by an hour's walk in the open air.

When he returned he was able to join with Alice in her endeavours to encourage and divert her grand-mother's mind. They succeeded to a certain degree, but although Mrs. Leslie's spirits rose with her new hope, her physical weakness and languor remained nearly unchanged.

As the post hour neared, Mark took an opportunity of taking Alice aside to bid her write to Oliver what had been done, adding, "It is useless now for him to remain in town."

In fact, after receiving Alice's letter next morning, he returned to the Grove in the afternoon. He found Mark and Alice sitting by Mrs. Leslie's couch. As soon as he glanced at his grand-mother, he said: "You have all done right." This was a great satisfaction to the rest, for they had feared his vexation.

Two days past heavily, though Alice exerted every faculty to keep up the spirits of those about her.

On the third day came a letter from Mr. Powell to Mrs. Leslie; as she opened it a note dropped out. Alice picked it up and saw Mary's hand; she broke the seal.

"Thank you all."

"Mary."

These were the whole contents. Mr. Powell's despatch ran thus:

"Dear Madam,

"I am happy to have it in my power to relieve the anxiety, which you have suffered in consequence of the rash step lately taken by Miss Leslie. No one can deplore that occurrence more sincerely than I do. It is, however, a consolation to know, that the evil has been limited to the alarm of friends, and that none has befallen the young lady. Thanks to Providence, she is now under the unexceptionable protection of two German ladies of rank, the Gräfin von Hessenberg, and the Gräfin von Hellequelle, both Canonesses of a German chapter. Under the wing of these pious persons, your grand-daughter has left London for Brussels. Miss Leslie's waiting woman accompanies her thither, and when this young woman

returns in a few days, you will have further details of your dear traveller's well being.

"From Brussels, Miss Leslie, still accompanied by the same ladies, will prosecute her journey to Italy, where it is her wish to spend a certain time in a religious community. Rest assured that the respectable persons with whom your granddaughter is travelling, will not leave her until she is safely conveyed to that destination, where even your maternal solicitude, will rest satisfied of her safety in all respects.

"Let us unite in thanksgivings to the Director of all things for the mercies vouchsafed, and let our prayers recommend our young pilgrim to Providence, and to the holy mother of God.

"I will instantly communicate the first tidings I may receive. In the mean time I remain,

"Your devoted servant,

"F. Powell."

The family quickly came to the resolution of setting out altogether to follow Mary to her retreat in Italy.

It became evident, on reading Mr. Powell's letter a second time, that it was written with many

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reticences, and however painful Mark felt the task, he saw it was his duty to elicit, if possible, more complete information. He wound up his courage and called upon the Priest.

The interview was cold and calm on both sides. The Priest protested that he knew nothing more than what he had stated. However, that might be, he was at all events impenetrable, and so prudently fenced in, that it was impossible to find him at fault. He volunteered with a show of polite frankness to communicate two letters received from Mary. In the first she requested a letter of recommendation to the two German ladies. The second was full of high wrought gratitude to the Priest and of religious enthusiasm. No new facts could be elicited from her expressions.

Mark asked the address of the house in London, where the two German Countesses had been living; it was given by Mr. Powell without a moment's hesitation, but he observed at the same time with a smile, that he feared it would be of little use.

The two men took leave of each other with icy politeness covering bitter resentment.

It was evident that the family must depend upon their own exertions, to trace out Mary's route and destination.

The plan, which appeared most advisable, was to wait the return of Betsy, from whom much information might be hoped, and in the mean time to carry on the preparations necessary to be made, previous to a distant journey and long absence.

The mere fact of having received news of the fugitive and of having laid out something to do, raised the spirits of all. Mrs. Leslie was better and left her room. There was so much active employment, that time went by less slowly than might have been expected, till the day which brought Betsy home.

It was unreasonable, but imagination will play such tricks, the hearts of all at the Grove sunk when they beheld her *alone*. It seemed to make more tangible Mary's absence.

The family gathered round her, each asking twenty questions in a breath. But poor Betsy, at the best never distinguished for quickness or presence of mind, was perfectly unable to answer these confused interrogatories. There was nothing

for it but to let her follow her own rambling ejaculatory method of recounting her travels.

"A letter?" oh, dear me no, Ma'am.

"No, Sir, no message." I'm so flurried.

"Let me remember. Oh, yes. Miss Mary sends her love to all at home. I was to mind and say; her love to *all.* Yes love to *all;* that was it. Nothing else. Yes. I left her quite well, poor dear; indeed she is in the best of her pleasure, with those women, or ladies, whatever they are, all in black gowns, with white tippets up to their chins, and frightful caps like poke bonnets. Very clean, I must say that for them; and then great strings of black beads hanging from their waist on one side. Then the house, half like a prison, half like a workhouse, and great black crosses stuck against the wall. Oh, my! how frightened I felt in that conventicle."

"Convent, you mean."

"Well, conventicle, or convent, it's a dismal sort of thing. And to think she's so pleased to get there. Gracious me!" (looking round), that she as might be in this beautiful home, not to say married to such a handsome young gentleman as

Mr. Mark, should take it in her head to run away to such a place as that. Well young ladies does have odd fancies. Patience me! if we didn't hide in London, shifting from hotel to lodging-house, and from lodging-house to hotel, for fear of being found, just like thieves, liable to be put in prison. At last came Mr. Powell's letter, and she, poor soul, down on her knees to thank God. Then two ladies came, dressed in black like any body else, only each had a gold cross hung round their neck. "Thinks I," these look respectable, surely they'll tell her to go home; but no. After talking with these ladies in the front room, while I staid in the bed-chamber. "Betsy," says Miss Mary, "we are going to Brussels." "Very well, Miss," says I. Where Brussels was I knew no more than the babe unborn. Bless you, it's over the seas far away. Oh! gracious goodness how sick I was, and how terrified. I thought my last day was come.

Well! after we had been three days in Brussels, Miss Mary seed me very dull, and says she smiling: "Betsy, you don't like these foreign parts."

"Can't say I does, Miss," says I. "Come cheer up," says she, "you'll soon see home again." "Oh! thank God," says I, "do let's get back as soon as possible."

Then Miss Mary told me as how she was not coming home, but going on to a place called Italy, with those two ladies as we came with from London. They have such hard names I can't remember them; it's Griffin something. Their maid was to do for my lady, and as I didn't understand the outlandish ways of speaking, Miss Mary said I should be unhappy so far from home, and she could send me back more easily from Brussels. How I did beg and pray her to come home with me. I almost cried my eyes out, but it was no use.

Oh! dear me, little I ever thought to see foreign parts, least of all to leave my dear young mistress there. But it was all settled, and next morning a young couple, English they were, going to London, came to take me with them. And Miss Mary, God bless her, told them to take good care of me, and gave them a handsome present. She was going away at the same time. So I

stopped out side the conventicle gate to see her get into the carriage with the Griffins, and when she caught sight of me, she smiled and waved her hand, and so they drove off. I didn't hear them tell the driver where to go, but I know it was to Italy, for Miss Mary told me the name three or four times.

Nothing more explicit could be gathered from Betsy, whose account confirmed, without throwing any light upon Mr. Powell's letter, which after all contained the only clear information, imperfect as it was.

Matters had been so managed as to bear so far a fair face, that any accusation of concealment or deception, could be substantiated only against Mary herself.

The only thing that now remained to be done, was to follow her, as best they might, step by step on the Continent, and to take counsel from circumstances how to work out the search.

All preparations were made to set out the following day, when in the evening Mrs. Leslie was taken so ill as to alarm her grand-children. The medical adviser sent for in all haste, pro-

nounced the seizure to be of a slight paralytic nature. Immediate danger was soon passed, but the state of the invalid could not allow of travelling for some time.

Dr. W—— thought that later, change of climate and especially of scene might be beneficial. In the meantime he recommended great prudence, and perfect quiet for body and mind.

Here was a stop to all intended proceedings, at a most important moment, for loss of time might render fruitless all endeavour to find Mary, before she should have taken any irrevocable step. This thought pursued Mrs. Leslie, yet it was evident that, in the present state of her spirits, the departure of both or either of her grand-sons on this journey, would prove a source of very dangerous agitation.

In this state of things Alice bethought her of an old friend and play-fellow, a former ward of the late Mr. Leslie's, school-fellow of Oliver and Mark's, though somewhat their senior. He had in those days spent many happy holidays at the Grove. Reginald Morton had since gone forth into the world; by degrees his letters, which at

first had been frequent, had slackened and then ceased, but his friends knew that he was settled in medical practice in Genoa. Alice now determined to write to Reginald, who residing in Italy, might at once take measures more rapidly than they could have done themselves, even had they set off upon their search, as they had intended.

Oliver and Mark at the same time addressed themselves to every official source through which enquiry abroad could be set on foot, but without in this way obtaining any result.

CHAPTER V.

THE *Ave Maria* was ringing from the church of a neighbouring convent, as Reginald Morton sat alone in his room after the toil of a fatiguing day.

His eyes rested idly through the twilight upon the prospect before him; the yellow tall church tower from which the bell sounded, on the opposite side of the street, two dark thick ilex trees in the open space beyond, then from behind these, standing out to view on a terraced eminence, the corner of a massive red palace with white marble balconies, and a distant peep of the sea closing the perspective, where sky and water met.

Any one who has ever been at Genoa, will at once recognise here a bit of the *superba*.

Long after the evening bell had ceased, Dr.

Reginald Morton continued looking forth from his window as the thickening shades fell, yet, strange enough, while his visual organs were fixed upon that which lay before them, his mind's eye dwelt upon a totally different scene, and memory carrying him back to his early youth, transported him among scenes unbeheld and friends unheard of for many a year. By what links of thought Reginald passed to these far off recollections, it would be equally useless and difficult to investigate, but the fact was that fancy bore him on her subtle many coloured wings away, away, to Grove House, and among all its well known inhabitants.

The dwelling, the wainscoted parlour, Mrs. Leslie, her grand-children, and the Abbé Moreau, were all there before him. The figures of his favourite friend Mark and Queen Mab, as he used to call Mary, standing out still more vividly than all the rest. He was once more a holiday boy among smiling, beaming faces, which seemed all unconscious that care or sorrow existed in the world.

"How many years is it," thought Reginald, "since I have heard from any of them, I wonder."

The convent bell broke again upon the silence of the evening, and rung forth the "De profundis," which in Genoa marks an hour after sun set. The young doctor had dreamed away full sixty minutes.

The servant came in with the light and the habitual salutation, "*Felice sera.*" No Italian servant would omit the gentle wish. The baseless fabric of Reginald's vision was at once swept away; he awoke, not in Grove House but in Genoa, no longer a gleeful boy but a man, with his full share of thought and anxieties.

The servant set down the lamp, and then handed a letter to his master. Reginald actually started when he saw the post mark "Winterford." He rubbed his eyes but there the word remained distinctly stamped, as much as to say, "yes, Winterford."

How strange! Here seemed an answer to his silent thought sent by some wizard's wand.

He broke the seal and glanced at the signature. "Alice Leslie." The contents ran thus:—

"My dear Reginald,

"Although it is years since we have met

or communicated, I am sure that you are not one to forget old friends, and that you will do your best to help us in our trouble. Reginald, we are in great distress of mind. Our dear, lovely, Mary has left us, has disappeared. She is in a convent in Italy, and you must try and discover her. She is gone with the intention of making herself a nun, but she has not yet had time to take the veil, and we may still be able to get her to change her resolve, if we can find her. She is in a convent in Italy. This is all the clue I can give, but I trust it may be sufficient for you who are on the spot.

"Do, pray do, find her.

"We are all coming to Genoa as soon as we can, but we are detained by grand-mamma, who has been very ill.

"I write to you at once that no time may be lost in discovering Mary."

Here Dr. Morton laid down the letter. "What!" thought he, "poor little Queen Mab, in a convent in Italy, and I am to find her. In Italy, a country where there are so many states, and each of them has convents as plenty as mushrooms in a

wood." And he felt more than ever under some strange spell.

With a sigh of bewilderment he took up the letter again, and found in the two latter pages a succinct sketch of the main facts we have related.

Reginald collected his thoughts, and wrote an answer full of affectionate sympathy, with assurance of ready devoted service, but also hinting, that the task assigned to him was more difficult than his correspondent seemed to anticipate, and pressing for any further possible particulars. He ended by expressing warmly his pleasure at the prospect of an approaching meeting with his old friends.

Six weeks later Dr. Morton was busy installing the Leslie family in a good hotel at Genoa.

His first impression was that of the change, eight or ten years had made in the well known faces, and he was shocked at the traces of illness in that of Mrs. Leslie. But her own gentle benevolent expression was still there. His friends also were struck with the marks of time and toil in the young Doctor's countenance. After the first quarter of an hour, however, the very same

Mark, Oliver, Alice, and Reginald of old times found each other, just as if they had parted in Grove House the day before.

One other only was missing, and the conversation turned very soon on that subject of paramount interest.

"So, you can tell us nothing of Mary?" said Mrs. Leslie, looking up sadly into Reginald's face.

"Not yet," returned he, "but," he continued, unable to bear the desponding expression that followed his answer, "I have set on foot enquiry through various channels, official and private, and what yesterday has not disclosed, to-morrow may bring forth. In my profession, we always say whilst there is life, there is hope."

Dr. Reginald left his friends early to take the rest required after their journey, but came the next morning to show them something of the town.

Mrs. Leslie still feeling fatigued, preferred remaining on a sopha placed before the open window, commanding a view of the busy port with vessels gliding in and out, the picturesque lighthouse on its high rock, and the sea beyond.

So the young people set out and wound their way through here a lane narrow and deep as a well, there streets showing ranges of edifices of Babylonian splendour, struck at every step by the oddity, the novelty, the beauty, the grandeur of the strong contrasts and varied picturesque effects, that make walking about Genoa an inexhaustible source of surprise and amusement.

They went on till they emerged upon the public garden named the *Acqua Sola.* Here a view burst upon them which drew a simultaneous cry of admiration from all.

A range of lofty, purple, jagged mountains, each bearing a fort like a jewel on its head, enclosed with its semicircle of gigantic arms, the amphitheatre of wildly shaped hills, up which the city climbs from the edge of the sea to the highest fantastic points of these secondary steeps. Like a town scattered by the hands of the Titans upon these broken jutting eminences; Genoa shows her churches, convents, stately palaces, red, brown, green, and yellow, with their noble terraces and balconies of white marble, like the gay colours of a grand nosegay set off by the mingling

green of orange and olive gardens, contrasting with dark tapering cypresses. At her feet the forest of masts in the port, beyond that the wide Mediterranean, and over all a bright deep blue sky.

Reginald was gratified with the impression received by his friends, and leading them through clumps of ilex, pine and flowering shrubs, pointed out the endless variety of beauty afforded by the expanse of land and sea open before them.

As they sauntered along, they came to a spot overlooking the road below, skirting the foot of the massive walls which support the terraced garden. Opposite stood a large edifice, across whose windows wooden lattices or slabs of slate were placed, slanting outwards from their base, so as to shut the persons within from sight of aught without, save the light which fell through the wider upper opening. Over the large portal was written in large letters, *R. R. di S. Giovanni.*

"What is that place, Reginald?" asked Alice.

"That is a convent of nuns," answered he, "the inscription means, *Le Reverende Romite di S. Giovanni.* (The Hermitesses of Saint John)."

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Alice darted forward, exclaiming: "Let us go and ask, perhaps Mary is there."

Dr. Morton hurried after her, laid a detaining hand and said: "Mary is not there; my inquiries have already obtained that certainty."

Alice stopped gazing intently at the building before her, with mingled awe and anxiety.

"Whenever you see the windows thus shaded," explained Reginald, "by blinds sloping the upper part outwards, like those to some hospital windows in England, you may know that it is a convent of women."

"Even the fair face of nature shut out," cried Alice.

"Yes, when passers by are likely to be seen with the rest of the external world," returned her companion.

"Are there many convents in Genoa?"

"Come with me fifty paces along this walk of the Acqua Sola," said Reginald, "and I will show you a few. Next to the *Romitē di S. Giovanni,* there behind that grove of ilex and cypress on our left stands the convent of the Father Capucins. To the right of that a little up

the hill, you perceive a large community of women. Further up the hill, behind those houses, are the two convents of *S. Bartolommeo* and *Sa. Maria della Sanita.* Down here, just opposite, a stone's throw from where we stand, that church tower in the large court, belongs to another monastery of nuns. A little further to our right, those three iron crosses point out the large community of the *Brignole*, named after their noble founder. As also from theirs, the *Fieschine* nuns, who inhabit that enormous yellow building crowning the hill beyond. Further off out of the city walls, on the other side of that torrent in the valley, on the top of that wooded hill, you see the white church and extensive establishment of the convent called from its situation "*Il Monte.*" Now let your look fall again within the precincts of the town, there at our feet on our extreme right, you see the cupolas of two churches, each belonging to their respective communities of monks. So that from this one spot where we stand, eleven monasteries can be counted, to say nothing of a far greater number, which we should look down upon, if we only crossed to the other side of this garden. In

short, take Genoa and the surrounding country, and we may sum up the enumeration emphatically in the word "Legion."

"And how," said Mark, "can we hope ever to find out Mary in this labyrinth?"

"Why," returned Reginald, "considering the number of these establishments, and the difficulty of penetrating behind those mysterious walls, the task is not easy; far less so, my dear Alice, than you imagined when you wrote to me at first. Nevertheless, we must not despair; on the contrary, let us hope that our Queen Mab is playing at hide and seek in some one of the convents of Piedmont or Liguria, for in this kingdom we have now a better chance of finding her than in the rest of Italy. I will explain why presently. Suffice to say just now, that my plan, upon which I have already begun, and which we will work out, is first to search throughout Piedmont: if after all without success, then you shall go on to the other parts of Italy, for which I will procure you all manner of letters of introduction. In the mean time remember the immortal adage, 'never say die.'"

They now turned back to their hotel, descanting on this cheering apothegm, and upon the grounds of Reginald's opinion, that Piedmont afforded some special facility for discovering Mary's retreat.

"*Pazienza!* is a great word in this country," concluded the young physician, "and you will have need of patience in this search, which cannot be easy or very rapid."

The family assisted and directed by Dr. Morton's local knowledge, followed the plan laid out by him. No day passed without some exertion, tending towards the end in view, but it hourly appeared less and less probable, that Mary was in Genoa or its neighbourhood.

Mrs. Leslie's health nevertheless evidently improved from change of air and scene, and the hope, that something was being done towards the recovery of her darling, carefully nursed as it was by her grand-children, who kept from her knowledge many a discouraging disappointment.

In spite of all Mark's endeavours, however, his inward struggles and despondency began to tell upon his external appearance. His grand-mother

mentioned his drooping looks with some anxiety to Dr. Morton, who opened a proposal, he thought, likely to benefit his young friend's health, and at the same time actively promote the business they all had at heart.

Reginald, in the course of his wide spread correspondence on that subject, had that day received a letter from an old friend, Mayor of a town we will call Monforte, situated on the northern side of the Apennines.

Signor Petronio, so this gentleman was named, readily undertook to carry on the investigation, respecting which he was consulted, and for which his large circle of official relations afforded facility. At the same time he expressed his opinion, that the presence of one of the family would expedite the business by clearing up more rapidly many questions, which, from a distance, must create delay and uncertainty. He concluded by a cordial invitation to Reginald's young English friend.

Dr. Morton urged the expediency of Mark going at once to Monforte, from whence he might push on the search with advantage along the northern folds of the Apennines and the plain

below, leaving Reginald to continue simultaneously that on the south side of the mountains and along the coast.

Oliver was obliged to return to Atherton, having only made on leaving England, arrangements for a short absence. Mrs. Leslie declared herself perfectly satisfied to remain with her grand-daughter in Genoa, under Reginald's friendly protection.

"You need not be uneasy about grand-mamma, I will take good care of her," said Alice.

So Mark set out for Monforte,

CHAPTER VI.

Knowledge of Piedmontese laws (or a good imagination!)

In May, 1855, the Piedmontese legislature passed a law, which while maintaining with scrupulous fidelity, the application of ecclesiastical funds to ecclesiastical purposes, transferred the administration of all conventual property to the direction of a civil board established ad hoc. The same law ordered the suppression of numerous religious communities.

These regulations were called for by crying abuses, among others, the insufficiency of the stipends of many of the lower clergy, which it was determined should out of the ecclesiastical fund above mentioned receive a moderate increase of stipend, so as to secure to each parish priest not less than 600 francs (*i.e.* about £30. English) annually.

It was also determined by the law of May, 1855, that the members of the suppressed convents should be disseminated among the remaining

monasteries. To each of them was allotted, as to all the other members of religious communities, a regular pension to be paid by the above named board.

The mendicant orders alone were excluded from the receipt of any pension, remaining as before dependent upon charity.

Any monk or nun belonging to a suppressed order was free not to enter another cloister, and might live at large like any member of the secular clergy, but in this case lost the right to the pension, retaining only a claim for the interest of such portion as such individual had originally brought to the convent.

The members of the mendicant orders brought no portion on entering their community, and therefore could claim nothing in case one of the order availed himself of the liberty given by the law, to retire from his convent.

The first necessary step in this new order of things, was to take an exact account of the property, to which the government thus became administrator. Orders were therefore issued to the Mayors, and other civil officers throughout the kingdom, to make correct inventories of all the

ecclesiastical possessions in their respective districts, also of the property and inhabitants of the various convents therein situated.

The clergy raised a violent outcry. It was even said that the Pope addressed a letter to the King of Sardinia on the subject. But his ministry, with all the respect due from a Catholic state to the head of the Catholic church, simply ignored this circumstance. They considered that Papal authority decides points of dogma, but does not extend to matters of administrative polity. And the enactments in question being of purely civil organisation, were entirely out of the range of the interference of Rome.

Many ecclesiastical zealots in their resentment, declared that according to certain existing canons of the church, they looked upon individuals that took an active share in passing or executing these laws, as falling ipso facto under excommunication.

It was precisely the existence of these new official sources of information which Reginald considered as propitious to the search for Mary in Piedmont. And he looked upon the Mayor of Monforte, a considerable town, as a useful auxiliary in such an investigation.

Some extracts from Mark's journal during this expedition will best convey his impressions and state of mind.

Mark's Journal.

Monforte, 23rd August, 1858.

It is now a week since I arrived in this house, where I have been received with the most gracious hospitality, and here I am installed as one of the family. The name of Reginald has been for me an open sesame to the hearts of all.

It is rare, I believe, in Italy to admit strangers intimately, but when the ordinary reserve is once broken through, you can no where meet with more real and courteous cordiality. At least I have found it so in my case.

Signor Petronio evinces a hearty interest in the business which has brought me here, and holds out hope of good possible result from the researches he enters upon in my behalf with sincere zeal. God knows what may be the upshot, but I shall to the end of my life entertain a strong feeling of gratitude to a man, who is so heartily ready to serve me on this occasion.

My host is kind-hearted and clear-headed, at once a practical man and a gentleman. He is of good birth and fortune, and for several years was an officer in the army, then having married a lady of this town, he retired from military service and settled here, where he finds occupation for an active nature in the superintendance of his wife's landed property, and in the duties of Mayor of Monforte.

His wife, Signora Emilia, is a lady-like motherly matron; their son, Massimiliano, a fine young man of twenty, and their daughter, a budding flower of fourteen, who just looks her pretty name, Candida, complete the family.

Had I not other absorbing cares in my mind, I should take great pleasure in observing a, to me, somewhat novel state of manners.

Life here has a patriarchal stamp, which is attractive to my taste, and offers a singular mixture of the democratic and aristocratical elements.

For instance, my hosts belong to the first society in the town, and are accustomed to move in the best circles in Turin and elsewhere. Yet I see Signora Emilia and her daughter, sitting in the morning like Andromache of old, among

their maidens, directing and assisting in various female works, including ironing the linen lately washed in the stream, and the winding of thread spun by their women servants, which is given to be woven for household use.

Then again, we habitually sit down to table with Signor Petronio's confidential bailiff, Beppo, who superintends the work of the farm situated at a village not far from the town. Signor Petronio places great confidence in this man, who has a deep and affectionate reverence for his master. Beppo is treated like an equal, yet never for an instant forgets the spontaneous respect due to his superior, nevertheless always perserving perfect ease and self-possession.

25th August.

Disappointment the first. Who knows how many more my journal is destined to record. This morning I was sitting with Signor Petronio, when he received some documents from neighbouring districts. I saw that a particular letter fixed his attention; he did not speak but he unconsciously glanced towards me, and there was a sparkle in his eye, and a flush on his cheek.

"Any thing for me?" asked I, and my heart beat high.

"I do not know," returned he, "we will see. The letter called his notice to the mention of a *forestiera* (a foreigner) in an inclosed list."

"This is not what you seek," he added the next moment in an altered voice, pointing to a name:

Maria Lever, Inglese, nata a Cork, età 40 anni. translation

(Mary Lever, English, born at Cork, aged 40.)

A lump of lead seemed suddenly to choke me.

"Courage," said my friend, "we may be more fortunate another time. You see we do get at the name and country, more or less exactly, of those in the monasteries. We shall do well at last."

He may be right. Certainly this disappointment of an instantaneous hope does not make things worse than they were yesterday, yet it left me much depressed.

French ablot taught Mark Italian... interesting

27th August.

I often bless the good old Abbé Moreau, who made me familiar in my boyhood with the Italian language. I now find it of the greatest use, not

only in itself, but in the facility which it gives me in making out the various dialects spoken in this part of Italy.

I am beginning to understand something of the ideas and interests of those about me. Some of Signor Petronio's friends assemble generally in the evening at his house, and I derive much instruction from their conversation, which turns on literature, politics, and all the questions of the day.

More real knowledge of a country is to be gained in a month, domesticated as I am in an Italian family, than in years by a foreigner wandering from town to town, passing from hotel to hotel, visiting picture galleries and views noted by tourists, associating with his own countrymen exclusively, or adding a small sprinkling of superficial acquaintances among Italians, by presenting a letter of introduction and exchanging a few formal visits.

I have already got a notion of the local politics of this place.

Monforte is divided into two parties, the liberal and the retrograde; the first friendly to the free institutions of 1847 and consequent progress; the

second, on the contrary, are bitter enemies to both, who not only sigh over the good old times, but form a watchful phalanx, ever covertly at work, to bring back despotism both monarchical and clerical. The rector is the head of this party. My friend Petronio, though averse to all passion and exaggeration, and moderate by nature as by principle, is looked upon as the leader of the liberals.

His enlightened views, his knowledge of the world drawn from experience in his own country and foreign travel, continue to give him an unsought influence over the inhabitants of this place.

Since he received and executed, as Mayor, the orders of the government with respect to the inventory of ecclesiastical property, the Rector has thought fit not to set a foot into his house; several of the clergy have followed the example, while other Priests, more liberally inclined, continue their accustomed intercourse with their valued friend.

Among others members of the church, who come frequently to the house, is a Capucin friar, Padre Salvatore, who particularly interests me. This man quite answers to my conception of a monk. I should like to take a sketch of his figure, as I have observed it many a morning, his

heavy garments falling in picturesque folds, and his tonsure adding a sort of halo to his head. There is an unpretending benevolence in the expression of his eyes, which attracts confidence. It seems that he has not been long in the convent of Monforte, to which he was transferred some months ago from Genoa. It was there that Signor Petronio knew him formerly; he holds this good Capucin in high esteem, and tells me that the worthy man is ever unostentatiously employed in some good work. It is also a pleasure to see, with what affectionate reverence the friar, in his turn, looks up to our excellent friend. Speaking with me the other day of Petronio, the *Padre* grew quite enthusiastic.

28th August.

I went yesterday with Signor Petronio to his country house, close to a village about two miles hence; part of the surrounding land he farms himself. I see that he is as much respected among the peasantry as by his neighbours in town; he is to these simple minded beings an oracle on all subjects, and makes benevolent and enlightened use of his influence.

The peasants consult him about their crops, and their domestic concerns; he helps them with advice and now and then with money. He introduces improvements in agriculture, settles family quarrels, and keeps up the village school. In short, he is all things to all men.

29th August.

A fatiguing and disheartening day. Signor Petronio, who insisted that I should not go alone, accompanied me ten miles out amoung the mountains, to investigate a vague report, that in a certain convent was a young girl from a foreign country. She turned out to be a German Swiss. Second delusive hope.

Signor Petronio with kind tact had forborne to buoy me up with precarious expectation, but as we returned he exerted himself thoroughly to dispel my discouragement.

The more I see of this man, the more closely I feel drawn towards him.

But however grateful I am for his unfailing efforts to keep up my spirits, they are unavailing against my own increasing sadness. Something tells me that Mary is irrecoverably lost.

30th August.

This morning I took a solitary walk towards the Capucin convent, at ten minutes distance from the town. It is an old building with a handsome church, placed in a secluded spot among the woods, yet between the boles of the trees there are peeps of distant country, such as hermits might be allowed to take of the world. It is really a place well chosen for a holy retreat.

All around me was silent and solitary; I seated myself in a sheltered spot and pondered long upon a thought, which has been gradually growing in my mind, and from which I draw strength and consolation under the sorrow which weighs upon me.

Perhaps that Mary after all is essentially right; a religious life, it may be, separating us from those dear to us during an existence, which passes rapidly as "the weaver's shuttle," secures best the meeting of loving spirits in eternity. I sometimes fancy that, if I am not destined to recover her, I may still in a manner share her existence, by following her example and entering a cloister.

I will entertain no rash resolve, nor, like a

spoilt child, pout and sulk because something dear has been snatched from me. It is clearly my duty not to cast a still darker shade over my grandmother's already too saddened old age. But if I live to see that tie also broken, I may then be free to seek a refuge at the foot of the altar, from that and from former sorrows.

Sacrifice, abnegation, humility, words which so often sounded in the Abbé Moreau and my grandmother's instruction, now have grown to a meaning in my mind. The grand idea of the solidarity of human souls begins to dawn upon me. I can draw no picture more lofty in its lowliness, more enviable in its mortification, than that of a resigned mind in a cloister. To feel the clog of self, with all its struggling passions cast off, and to taste the calm of death 'ere yet we have "shuffled off this mortal coil;" to live only in holy thoughts and deeds, and, as a watchful pilot in a quiet haven, stand ever ready to rush in the life boat to the rescue of poor mariners still tossing upon the stormy sea; can we conceive any calling comparable to this? Who knows whether Mary was not more worthy, than I, to enter first upon this holy

path, or why the cup of apparently innocent happiness was dashed from my very lips! Nothing but such a shock could have turned my thoughts to the cloister, upon which my mind now dwells with inexpressible comfort. Still I cannot disguise to myself, that if I could but once more find Mary, and in her the promised wife of my bosom, this real happiness would at once dispel, like a fog before the sun, every other more shadowy yearning, which has grown out of the sudden loss of hopes which were to me as certainties.

29th September.

It is a month since I have had time to think of my journal. The cholera which was rife last year in Genoa and the Riviera, in its capricious retreating course broke out in this neighbourhood four weeks ago, spreading as ever terror on all sides. A great part of the population fled. Petronio sent away his family, remaining himself steadily at his post. He laboured actively to establish sanitary measures, and to provide care and attendance for the sick. Not omitting to cheer as many

as he could by daily visits. Day and night he was on foot, for all the work fell upon him, most of the other municipal officers having disappeared.

A rumour of the state of things reached Reginald, and he wrote to press my return to Genoa. But this was not a time to desert my friend, when all I could do to help him was too little. I explained this to Morton, adding that my situation resembled much his own last year when the cholera was at Genoa. He understood me and promised, as I begged of him, to keep the report of the sanitary state of this province from my grand-mother and Alice. They would otherwise be uneasy without cause. I told Reginald that I felt I bore a charmed life. There are times when the excitement of a little danger and some exertion do great good.

The scourge shewed itself first violently in the village where lies Signor Petronio's property. The mayor of the place and the adjutant fled. The parish priest, a good man, could not suffice to all the calls which distracted him on every side, and the people sent to the Capucin convent to beg assistance. Padre Salvatore volunteered to go.

The next morning Petronio learned this from one of his tenants; he hurried to the village and I accompanied him. His duties in the town necessitated his speedy return, but after begging hard I got from him, and Padre Salvatore, permission to remain with the latter, and lend what little aid I could.

It was then that I saw developed to the utmost, those powers I had instinctively guessed at in this man.

Scenes strange and thrilling I witnessed, which will never leave my memory.

When Padre Salvatore arrived in the village, the panic was at its height, obliterating in many cases the most sacred natural affections. Husbands, wives, fathers, and even mothers had, many of them, abandoned their miserable relatives struck by the disease. Some unhappy creatures even lay helpless in the street. These Padre Salvatore would raise in his arms, and lay them on their poor beds. He soothed and tended all the sick, encouraged those in health as much by example as by words, to give the proper care; or when death could no longer be combated, softened

by religious hope and consolation, the last moments of the dying.

The Rector, from the first evening, had empowered the *Padre* to administer the last sacraments in his parish.

How noble was this Friar in his unpretending humanity and quiet holiness. The living exemplification of my ideal monk!

At the end of ten days the epidemic had done its worst in the village and began to decline rapidly. Padre Salvatore and the Rector were quite sufficient for the remaining task.

So I returned to Monforte, where the sickness and terror were at their worst. I found Signor Petronio in great want of assistance. The good mayor seemed to multiply himself on every side. Activity, presence of mind, kindness, he failed in none of these. In this crisis he was not inferior, even to my favourite monk, either in humanity, zeal, or self-devotion.

I did my best to help, and Padre Salvatore, soon having nothing further to do in the country, returned, and added his valuable succour.

A month has elapsed; after carrying off nu-

merous victims, the disease, apparently satisfied, has vanished.

The epidemic has passed away and things are returning to their natural state. It is strange to observe how man is constituted to quickly lose the impressions of calamity.

1st October.

We have recovered sufficient tranquillity already to allow Signor Petronio to think once more of my business, and he has to-day dispatched more than a score of letters in various directions.

2nd October.

More and sad trouble. Signor Petronio is ill, not of cholera but of fever, from the effect of over exertion. His physician, who is a friend also, tells me there is much to fear.

3rd October.

The family have been sent for in all haste, for Dr. Angelo is extremely uneasy with respect to his patient.

4th October.

Thank God things are going on more favourable. The presence of his wife and children seems to have raised Petronio. He is a fond husband and father, and the arrival of his loved ones produces a most beneficial effect.

Circumstances have knit me to this man so nearly in a very short time, and have enabled me to know him so intimately, that I feel for him as for a friend loved from infancy. Heaven grant his life may be spared.

9th October.

Petronio is no more. It is now two days since my friend expired, and till now I could not collect the composure necessary to write down the closing scenes of this good man's life. Even at this moment, my head is dizzy, and I feel as if I held my pen in a dream.

From the time of my last entry in my journal, we continued full of hope till towards the evening of the third day, when the patient seemed to become rather torpid and to complain of oppression. His wife was about to send hastily for Dr

Angelo; Petronio called her back and begged that at the same time she would request his habitual confessor, Don Pio, to come to him. Seeing Signora Emilia's alarm at these words, he tried to soothe her, saying that the issue of his illness might still be favourable, but that it was right to be prepared for every event, and that he had lived a good Catholic, so he should wish to die as became one.

The Doctor came in a few minutes. I saw his countenance fall on examining the sick man. Being told that Petronio had sent for his confessor, he merely observed that it was always well to attend to spiritual concerns, and then prepared a cordial.

"The Doctor, you see, is of my opinion," said Petronio. "Thank you, Angelo, for your frankness. I feel I have no time to lose."

He took the cordial and seemed to repose, still holding his wife's hand; his son and daughter were on the other side of the bed. Dr. Angelo came to the fire, near which Padre Salvatere and I were sitting. In answer to an inquiring look, he whispered: "The change is

rapid and unexpected; I fear he may not go through the night." He took a chair between us and all remained in silence.

At the end of about ten minutes the Ave Maria began to toll; Padre Salvatore started and rose.

"I must go," said he, glancing towards the bed, "it is the rule of the convent not to be out after the Ave Maria, and the rule must be observed, but I will ask leave to pass the night with a sick person, as I was permitted to do in many cases during the cholera;" and he glided away after a few affectionate words addressed to Petronio, but he did not return.

Presently Don Pio came and we all went into the next room, leaving him with his penitent.

Don Pio is one of the secular clergy, and has been Petronio's confessor for some years. After a time the Priest came out of the room; he looked flushed, and taking Signora Emilia aside, whispered a few words, ending aloud with: "I shall call again in a couple of hours," and glided away.

Signora Emilia appeared much agitated by the

communication she had received, and making a sign to us to remain where we were, went into her husband's room.

She soon returned in still greater disorder.

Don Pio had informed her husband, that by the act of having made in his official capacity, the inventory of the ecclesiastical property within his jurisdiction, he was placed among those excommunicated by Rome for thus having taken part in the two laws censured by the papal see. The Priest required a formal adjuration of this error and all consequent acts, before he would admit his penitent to confession, adding the assurance that even if he deviated from the instructions of his superior, so far as to receive confession, the Rector would never administer the sacrament without fulfilment of the enjoined declaration.

Petronio had remonstrated and reasoned in vain, and had finally refused to comply with the prescribed condition, whereupon Don Pio had retired, requesting Signora Emilia to use her influence with her husband to alter his determination, promising to return in a couple of hours,

when he hoped to find his penitent better disposed.

Signora Emilia's first remonstrance had only irritated Petronio, and she now begged us to return to him with her.

When we went into the room we found the sick man with excited looks, and his sunken eyes flashed fire.

"Emilia has told you?" asked he panting. "I cannot and I will not do it."

"There must be some mistake in this matter," said I, endeavouring to soothe him.

"No mistake at all," returned Petronio, "Don Pio used neither ambiguity or circumlocution; he simply required that I should declare what I think right to be wrong; that I should with my dying breath avow myself criminal for fulfilling my duty; that I should cast a stigma upon measures, which I applauded, and upon other men whose acts I have partaken and approved. He would make this cowardly desertion of principle and honour, the price of the rites of my religion, which I claim at his hands as a dying christian.

But even he shall not make me forswear myself at this solemn moment."

"Oh! but consider," exclaimed the Signora, throwing herself on her knees by the bed in a burst of passionate weeping, "consider, my Petronio, my dear, dear husband, you cannot thus refuse the sacrament; all worldly things are as nothing, it is your soul which is at stake."

"For that reason, Emilia, I will not charge my conscience with a lie. What is required of me under pretext of religion is to sacrifice houour and truth. A man's duties cannot be thus at variance with each other."

"Papa," said poor little Candida, "cannot you try and do what Don Pio wishes; do you not think that he knows these things?"

"And you too, my darling," said the sick man in a very low breathless voice, his countenance working with strongly painful emotion, "would you then, innocent child, have your father die with a *lie* on his lips?" added he with newly rising excitement.

Candida, frightened, exclaimed: "Oh! no papa, pray forgive me."

Petronio, by a strong effort, put his hand round her neck and kissed her head.

"Never mind the women," cried Massimiliano, "they do not know what they say. Be what you have always been, my father, an upright man, the pride of your family, and despise this priestly persecution. All this is just the spite of the Rector."

The father looked up proudly at his son and pressed his hand.

"Probably," said the Doctor gently, "when Don Pio returns it will be with a softened purpose. I cannot suppose he will really carry through such a menace."

"He will, depend upon it," answered Petronio in a faint voice. After a moments pause he added, speaking with difficulty: "Come what may, it is a point of conscience, I cannot give up. . . . . I will not die a traitor to my friends and my convictions."

He lay some time with his eyes closed in evident exhaustion, then murmured in a low voice: "Cruel to press thus upon the enfeebled frame of a poor dying creature!" Then after a silence,

he said: "Doctor, the only proof of friendship, which you can add to many, I have received from you, is to administer some cordial that may keep up my strength and allow my mind to remain clear, so that I may not fail in the last trial."

Angelo went out and brought a phial, from which he poured some drops, that seemed to revive the poor sufferer; the Doctor enjoined that he should be kept perfectly quiet.

We sat by in solemn silence listening to the uneasy breathing of the patient, and occasionally administering to him a spoonful of broth or of cordial.

So time slipped on till Don Pio returned.

Again we withdrew.

After some conference he came forth.

"I am deeply grieved," said he to Signora Emilia, "my visit has been useless, perfectly useless. If your husband should fortunately change his mind, send for me, I shall be ready at any moment."

The Doctor stopped Don Pio as he was going out, to ask if no method of overcoming so painful a difficulty could be suggested.

"Previous recantation, or no confession," answered the Priest. "The orders of my superior are peremptory."

"But, Sir," observed I, "allow me respecfully to submit, that Signor Petronio has done no more than follow the orders of *his* superiors."

The Priest fixed his eyes upon me, and said:

"You are English."

"Yes."

"And no doubt a Protestant?"

"Pardon me. I am a Catholic born and bred; but in my country no Priest would venture to exact disobedience to the civil power. Let me entreat you in the name of our common religion, not to pursue a course, which must bring reproach upon our church, especially there where many are on the look out to attack Catholicism."

"Consider also," observed the Doctor, "the effect that will be produced in Monforte, where Petronio is justly popular."

"Distressing, very distressing," replied Don Pio looking first to one and then to the other.

"Why," resumed the Doctor, "this bull is not recognised or registered in Piedmont, and, to

say the least, the Rector must have a discretionary power to dispense with its observation. I know for certain that when the Mayor of St. Luca, who had taken the same kind of inventories as Signor Petronio died last week, nothing of this kind occurred."

"I cannot pretend to pronounce upon the dictates of conscience for my brethren. I only know that the Rector admits no doubt or hesitation. You may well believe," resumed the Priest, after a pause, "that I am ready to do all in my power, and a very little complaisance on the part of our poor friend, will set every thing to rights."

We listened eagerly, and he went on. "If he will but sign or acknowledge before witnesses the mere form of a retractation, the paper shall be so worded as to mean scarcely anything; yes, gentlemen, scarcely anything."

He seemed to feel as if at last he had hit upon an effective solution of the difficulty, and added brightening: "I will go and propose this; indeed it is our duty to use every kind of delicacy in such a matter."

And with that he returned to the sick man.

"I fear," said I to the Doctor, "that Petronio will object, that a retractation means something or nothing. If nothing why require it?"

Probably the dying man had yet strength enough to make some such reflection, for Don Pio returned almost immediately, exclaiming: "Unhappy man, obstinate to the last!"

"You must allow," said I, "that it was a mere subterfuge you proposed. Surely, reverend Sir, you can find some better method of avoiding a crying scandal."

"I only obey strict orders," replied Don Pio, "however painful. Even if I were to disobey them, and receive the penitent's confession, the Rector would inexorably refuse the sacraments. The responsibility would be on the head of an obstinate recusant."

"The responsibility," cried I, "will be on the head of a bigoted, imperious, vindictive Priest. Tell your Rector from me, that an English Catholic protests against this stain upon our faith, as thousands more in every land will do. As for you, Don Pio, you have my pity."

He moved to go, but Signora Emilia flung

herself at his feet, and clung to his gown, imploring him not to abandon her husband.

Massimiliano disengaged her hands from the Priest's dress, and lifted her up in his arms, saying: "Mother, let the man go; let him no longer darken the last hours of our true Christian."

Don Pio slipped away. The son gently laid his mother on a sopha, and leaving Candida in care of her, returned to his father's room and seated himself flushed and silent near the bed.

Petronio lay in a state of prostration; after a time he looked up at his son, the Doctor and me, saying in a weak voice: "I heard part of what you said. Thank you. Sympathy is pleasant. No more about it. Something to drink."

Signora Emilia by a strong effort, resumed sufficient composure to join us, and we spent the rest of the night in watching the ebbing of life, administering what little alleviation we could.

From time to time some smothered, broken words betrayed the dying man's hovering thoughts. "I did not deserve the insult!" "To be left to die like a dog!" "I did my duty!" "Cruel to my family!" "I am an honest man!"

As day dawned and the Ave Maria sounded, the symptoms of approaching dissolution increased. The Doctor whispered to me that he would in person inform the Rector of the imminent danger; this might perhaps modify his purpose after all.

For the relief of breathing a little fresh air, I went with Angelo into the next room, and after he was gone, continued still pacing up and down, when Padre Salvatore appeared.

"Is he still alive?" asked he breathless.

"Yes, but sinking rapidly."

"Thank God, he is not yet gone," returned the Padre. "I was not permitted to come back last night. I have not slept a wink; I trembled lest I should be too late this morning."

In a few words I recounted the events of the night."

"Refuse the sacraments to such a man as Petronio!" exclaimed the Friar livid with emotion.

"Even so, my friend."

We went together to the sick chamber.

Padre Salvatore took the dying man's hand and pressed it between both his. Petronio opened his eyes.

"Padre . . . . you know refused confession."

"Courage, my friend," said the Monk soothingly. "Think of our Lord so patient under persecution."

"Ah, but I am human—a poor human creature." Then after a pause he fixed his heavy eyes with a painfully wistful gaze on Padre Salvatore's face, and murmured: "I would fain not have died with anger at heart."

"I will receive your confession," said the Friar unhesitatingly, "if you will confide in me."

"You are a man of God, I always said so," replied the sick man with renovated spirit.

The Friar signed to us to leave the room.

After some time he called us back. We found Petronio propped by pillows, his countenance expressing perfect serenity, and a quiet smile lighted up his features as he looked upon us.

"I will go to the Rector myself," said Padre Salvatore, "perhaps now that you have received absolution, he may consent to administer the sacrament, or empower me to do so."

"Padre Salvatore is an angel!" exclaimed the

dying man, "he has poured oil into my wounds and they are healed."

And then he remained silent and calm, only breathing with some difficulty.

What a grand privilege, thought I, to be able to bestow such consolation at such a time! The existence of a minister of the altar, like Padre Salvatore, is next to divine.

Soon we heard him return accompanied by the physician.

Petronio cast one keen glance at them as they stood beside him.

The Monk shook his head.

"Be it so," said Petronio meekly. For a few minutes we again left him alone with the confessor, who presently beckoned us to return.

We stood round the bed. Petronio looked at the crucifix which the Monk held towards him, and said in a low but audible tone:—

"I die at peace with all the world, and I forgive even those, who have used me despitefully in this, my extreme need.—I say, as said our Lord—'They know not what they do.'"

He lay silent for some minutes to recover

strength, and then added, while a look of calm overspread his countenance.

"I die content, for I leave an unsullied name to my children. My son, I bless you; and you my dear wife and daughter, my friends, you have my blessings and my thanks; you, Padre, my eternal gratitude."

He ceased exhausted, and spoke no more. He continued to look at us serenely for some minutes, then his eyes closed as if in sleep. He lay thus two hours, with no other proof of life than weak, fitful breathing, and his soul at last passed away in an almost inaudible sigh.

Thus died Petronio, a noble soldier in a civil battle.

I am still stunned. Yet almost immediately after the death, it was necessary to collect our thoughts for the indispensable cares of the moment.

It was more than probable that the usual burial in consecrated ground would be contested. To avoid this additional indignity to his father's memory, Massimiliano determined to transport the remains to poor Petronio's native town, at the

other end of Piedmont, of which the Rector loved our lost friend, and by whose Christian spirit proper respect was sure to be testified to departed worth.

All necessary preparations were made, and yesterday Massimilano set out to accompany the body on its melancholy journey. Signora Emilia and Candida were previously removed to the house of a friend in this town. The former is confined to her bed from the effects of agitation and grief. As soon as she is sufficiently recovered to travel, I have promised Massimilano to accompany his mother and sister to a family of their relations in Turin, where he will meet them, after fulfilling his present sad duties.

12th October.

Signora Emilia still in bed. This house is to be shut up for the present. The good Doctor has pressed me to take up my quarters with him till I get the expected answers to several letters poor Petronio wrote.

Two came to hand to-day. Nothing satisfactory.

13th October.

Here I am a guest in kind Doctor Angelo's house.

The respective conduct of the Rector and of Padre Salvatore in the late event, is the talk of the whole town. No words can express the enthusiasm excited by the good Monk. It does honour to human nature that, when the hearts of men are touched by good and generous deeds, like the rock in the desert by the rod of Moses, the living waters of sympathy gush forth.

The Rector who was always more feared than loved, is now looked upon with a feeling akin to aversion.

An under current of jealousy always exists between the regular and the secular clergy. On this occasion the whole convent of Capucins are doubly proud of the honour brought upon their house by Padre Salvatore.

Yesterday, Sunday, by express order of the Padre Guardiano, (so are called the superiors of the less numerous communities) Padre Salvatore, though much against his own wish, preached in the Capucin church, and, although he took care

to let it be known, that the subject of his discourse would have no reference to the late occurrences, the whole population attended to hear his sermon. The edifice was crowded to suffocation, while scarcely a soul was in the Parish church. The Rector is furious, the Capucins triumphant, though striving to apper *umili in tanta gloria.*

14th October.

To-day the Mayor of a neighbouring town dined with us, the conversation fell upon the occurrences, and the worthy man ended by saying with great simplicity:—

"I see that I am exactly in the same situation in which was poor Petronio, so to avoid puzzling annoyances to my family in case of my death, I have determined to petition the Home Secretary for leave to be buried in my own vineyard, and I shall write directions in my will to that effect. I am just as well satisfied with that resting place."

Those in England, who nurse a practical tenderness for mediæval institutions, would, I think, be cured of their fancies, if they could see how the real thing works where it has flourished un-

disturbed to this day, and how nobly is at present carried on in this country the contest equally strenuous and moderate, against the ecclesiastical despotism, which the nation feels to be like the Upas tree, allowing nothing to live or prosper under its baleful influence.

Signora Emilia is sufficiently recovered to think of setting out to-morrow. When I have seen her and her daughter to their destination, upon the friendly Doctor's invitation, I shall return here to wait for my letters.

I also feel a strong desire to communicate confidentially with Padre Salvatore, who has been too much occupied all these past days, to allow me to think of asking him for an hour.

He has become the favourite confessor of all the town, and the peasantry flock to his confessional from five in the morning till evening.

In short, my favourite Monk is the fashion in Monforte and the neighbourhood.

"Let us hope," said the Doctor yesterday, "no reverse may follow for the good father."

"How should it?" asked I.

"Dante's verse," returned he, "applies to

popular favour as to fortune: *necessità la fa esser veloce.*"

22nd October.

Here I am back again, after my journey with Signora Emilia and Candida. The good Doctor gave me a hearty welcome, and we have been talking over the news of the little town since my departure.

"I told you how it would be," said my host. "Padre Salvatore's popularity has raised up against him a host of enemies. There is a cabal against him even now, made up of the Rector and his friends united with many of the father's brother Monks, who are jealous that all the penitents persist in going to him."

"What can they do?" inquired I.

Chi sa? ("who knows") and upon this vague answer, often applied here from old habit to questions of abuse of power; we separated and retired to rest.

I have found three letters, they bring no clue. I wait for two more, rather to fulfil my duty to the last, than from any remaining hope.

To-morrow Padre Salvatore may fix a time to see me. I feel as if confession to that holy man would do me good. My mind clings more and more to the thought of the cloister as a final consolation.

23rd October.

Well! the Doctor's prognostications have proved true.

This morning when I went to the convent and asked for Padre Salvatore, I was told he was in his cell, and being directed, found my way thither, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said a well known voice. I opened the door and saw the Monk sitting at his deal table, on which lay a breviary, a testament and some other volumes besides writing materials.

The rest of the furniture consisted of a pallet bed with a mattress and blanket, but no sheets; a print of the Madonna hung at the head. Opposite the foot, a large dark wooden crucifix was fixed against the wall, below which were appended a small receptacle for holy water, and a rosary with a miniature death's head; beneath, stood a

wooden *prie Dieu.* A second straw chair beside the one occupied by the Monk, completed the contents of the room.

I told the Friar at once the purpose of my visit.

"My dear young man, I cannot take your confession," he replied.

"Am I too excommnnicated then? What have I done?"

"You, nothing, but I have done much. It seems that too many penitents have been engrossed by me, so this morning, not an hour ago, came notice that the Bishop has withdrawn my license of confession."

"This is infamous!" cried I.

"Hush, not so loud," said the Monk, glancing at the door and open window.

"And there you are quite calm! Father Salvatore you are a saint!"

"Not quite," he replied smiling, "but I have seen so many things worse than this, that I am but slightly moved by the mortification."

"It is the work of a cabal!" I exclaimed.

"Well! the thing has certainly been done by

an intrigue, which has misrepresented me to the Bishop."

"But you will not sit down under such ill usage?"

"It would perhaps be the wisest thing to do, but I am afraid my friends have already begun to bestir themselves in my behalf, without consulting me."

"Then you will have justice done you after all."

The Monk looked at me with a benignant but rather sad smile. "You are very inexperienced," said he.

"Rather so in some things," returned I, "therefore it was, I wanted to open my heart to you. However, if I cannot have you as my confessor, I trust I may call you friend, just the friend I want."

"A sympathising and trusty one at least."

"When will you allow me to have an hour's talk with you?"

"To-day, if you will. My forced leisure gives me full time to enjoy your conversation, and it will do me good."

At this moment a bell began to ring. "That summons us to the refectory for dinner. Wait for me in half-an-hour by the river side, near the foot of the bridge."

We met at the appointed time, and after a few words of greeting, walked on in silence, which Padre Salvatore broke by observing:—

"When you have shared the bread and salt of the wild Arab of the desert, you are sure that he will neither injure or betray you. Now I every day share bread and salt with my reverend brethren, who all and each have been busy in doing me as much harm as lies in their power. Let us go this way," added he, leading across the bridge and along a path up the course of the river. "When anything ruffles me, I seek this walk; the sound of the stream rushing over the stones, and the play of the light upon the water, soothe my spirit."

We went on till we came to a small deserted chapel, situated in a sunny sheltered nook, among the woods that clothe the mountain torrent.

"Now," said the Monk as we seated ourselves upon the steps of the little building, "let us think of something more interesting than conventual squabbles. You said you wished to talk to me of yourself, my friend."

Then I laid my whole heart open to him. I told him of my love, my loss, my search, my waning hopes; part of this he had already heard from Petronio.

"And you know not," said the father, "what a strong interest your story awakened in my breast."

I went on to say how the thought of the cloister had grown up in my mind, as a distant prospect of peace, a ray of consolation in the thickening gloom around; how I had found in him the living personification of my idea, how his example had sunk into my heart, how I yearned to follow in his footsteps.

He listened to me in silence, occasionally only broken by a short pertinent question, and a strong interest, evinced the whole time by the varied workings of his countenance.

When I left off speaking, he remained for some

time lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the flowing river. At last he said looking up at me :—

"No, you must not dream of a cloister, that will never do for your generous, lofty nature. God forbid that the exaggerated estimation, your enthusiastic temper leads you to make of me, should contribute to throw you into a fatal error. In the first place, you attribute immensely too much merit to me for the little I could do in the cholera. You, my young friend, gave proof of far more self-devotion; the life which you risked, may still have much happiness in store for you, while mine—" He stopped, and fell again into musing, then resumed thus: "Nothing is more dangerous than to found practical resolutions upon a partial view of another person's situation. If my example or experience can be of any use to you, it must be as a whole. The best thing I can do is to give you my little history just as it has been from the beginning."

The narrative which followed has sunk deep into my mind. Without attempting to reproduce the Friar's words, I shall just note down the facts

and details, while the impression is still fresh. I can have no better employment during the leisure hours of the few more days I am to remain here.

CHAPTER VII.

THE father of Padre Salvatore, Signor Gerolamo Vanni, was a rich merchant in Genoa, who had entirely made his own fortune. He had three children, two boys, the yonngest of whom was Salvatore, and one girl. The love and pride of the father centered wholly in his first born son; to secure to this eldest a large patrimony and a brilliant marriage became the passion of the old merchant's life.

To this end the daughter and the second son, were from childhood destined to the cloister. Salvatore's sister took the veil at seventeen, and he at sixteen was sent to begin his noviciate in a convent of Capucins. The youth entered upon this without any aversion, for he had always heard he was to be a Friar, and from his infancy he had

lots of parents die young

been influenced in that direction by his mother, a strictly pious woman, who died young.

Six months of Salvatore's noviciate had slipped away serenely, when he fell dangerously ill; his life was long in danger, and his convalescence difficult. The medical man asserted that change of air was indispensable to final recovery, and permission was readily granted for the novice to spend some time in the house of an uncle, the Rector in a village among the mountains. The only condition made was that the monastic habit should be laid aside, while the youth was out of the convent walls.

Next door to the house of the Rector of San Feliciano, was the dwelling of an old lady; the two gardens were separated only by a vineclad trellice.

The old lady had a grand-daughter. How it was that the young people saw, loved each other and mutually owned their love, it is needless to recount. Suffice it to say that from that moment all Salvatore's thoughts and feelings changed. He thanked God that he still was free; and in the truthful confiding honesty of youth, he wrote

to his father the discovery he had made, that his vocation was not for the convent; asking at the same time the paternal consent to his marriage with Lucia.

Imagine the rage of Signor Gerolamo at the receipt of this most unexcepted simple-minded epistle. He sent in return thunders of wrath and indignation, desiring the Rector, his kinsman, to despatch instantly back to his convent, an unruly boy, who for a whim would fain overturn the plans of family prosperity, long and laboriously laid out by paternal wisdom and experience.

Salvatore refused to go; and understanding now the ground of his father's objection, wrote anew to protest against the imputation of wishing to cause any impediment to dispositions he entirely respected; he asked but his own portion of his mother's small property; with this he would go forth and seek his fortune, and was ready to engage that his family should hear no more of him.

Lucia had promised her lover she would wait his return as soon as he had found a position, in which he might maintain a wife, whose habits and wishes were very moderate.

Signor Vanni found it difficult to manage the spirited, headstrong youth. His second letter was more conciliating than the first. He did not wish to force his son's conscience, but he surely had a right to ascertain, that Salvatore was not led away by an evanescent caprice. The youth must return to the convent and complete his noviciate; this proof of obedience alone would his father take as atonement for the displeasure a son's undutiful outbreak had caused. Moreover, this immediate mark of submission alone could obtain that father's consent to his present wishes, if they continued unaltered at the time, when the novice would be called upon to decide for or against taking irrevocable vows.

Salvatore recoiled from yielding, but every one, his uncle, Lucia's grand-mother, Lucia herself urged him not to refuse the means held out of propitiating his parent, who had a right to ask some sacrifice. Their advice prevaided.

"I never will take the vows," said Salvatore to Lucia, when they met to take leave. "I will return to you free. Be true to me, my beloved."

"I never will marry any one but you, Salvatore, The Holy Virgin hears my vows."

And so they parted.

Salvatore returned to his convent with loathing, and with a fixed purpose to go steadily through the probation, never omitting an opportunity of honestly telling the superior, that he had made up his mind never to take the vows. And he kept his resolution. At last the decisive moment came, and Salvatore still remained pertinacious in his refusal, despite the remonstrances and admonitions of the superior.

Signor Gerolamo Vanni was duly informed of the fact by a respectfully worded letter from his son, inclosed in one from the superior.

A few days later the young novice was summoned into the room of the reverend father, who pointed in silence to two letters lying on the table. One was from Signor Gerolamo, containing his consent to his son's return to the world. "Salvatore was free to choose his own course. His future plans should be settled at home. Only, as a proof of what futile fancies had lured the unfortunate youth from a holy path, his father inclosed a letter lately received."

Salvatore opened it trembling, and found in the contents an account of Lucia's marriage, which had taken place a month before, with one who had been, Salvatore knew, a suitor for her hand and had once been rejected. This letter was written in answer to one of inquiry from Salvatore's father, and bore a signature, a name well known to the youth as that of a respectable inhabitant of San Feliciano.

The poor youth staggering under the blow, refused credence to such a fact; it was impossible, "He would go;" the thought of the delays he should find before he could obtain permission and money to make the journey, cut short the resolve as it was uttered, "No, he would write."

The monk pushed writing materials towards him, and he wrote a few distracted lines for Lucia, enclosing them to a friend at San Feliciano, whom he charged to put them into her own hand.

The letters were sealed and sent off at once.

In due time Salvatore was again called into the presence of the superior, who again in silence handed a letter from Signor Gerolamo for his son, it contained simply this:

"Poor boy, read."

Enclosed was his own letter to Lucia, with these words added in a man's hand upon the back of the page:

"My wife gave me this epistle as a virtuous woman was bound to do. Prevent further attempts from your son to disturb my peace, and bring dishonour upon a stainless lady's reputation, or I shall know how to chastise the boy."

This was signed by Lucia's husband.

A month from that day Salvatore had taken the irrevocable vows.

He had now acquired the greater degree of freedom, which is the privilege of the professed fathers. The father had been a frequent benefactor of the convent, which no doubt added to the zeal of the pious brethren in seeking to secure the son within the walls of their community from the snares and dangers of the world. On the other hand Signor Gerolamo proved himself grateful for this solicitude, by continuing occasional alms to the convent, so the poor broken-hearted youth enjoyed as many advantages as were compatible with his situation.

It happened one day that Salvatore, going by the church of the Annunciata, went in; at the

further end of the magnificent nave, he perceived a marriage service going on ; he stepped quietly along an aisle till he came near enough to observe the wedding party, In the bridegrom he recognised his brother Filippo, handsome, brilliant, elated, casting looks of proud love upon the bride by his side, splendid in beauty and jewelled attire. Immediately behind stood his father, whose whole aspect breathed complacent triumph. They were surrounded by a numerous company composed of the aristocracy of Genoa, mingled with some of her merchant princes.

Signor Gerolamo Vanni had obtained the wish of his heart, a noble lady for his son. The Marchese Andriani, father of the bride, was the descendant of one of the oldest and most distinguished families of Genoa. This representative of the Andriani possessed a brilliant genealogy, a palace, bearing his name, heavily mortgaged, a handsome daughter, but not a hundred Napoleons towards paying a long list of onerous debts, fruit of many follies and vices. Signor Gerolamo, under pretext of a loan of which he never expected to see either capital or interest, cleared off these sums, and thus obtained for Filippo the hand

of the Marchesina, and the couple now stood before the altar.

During the mass Salvatore remained observed by none, leaning against a column which almost concealed him. When the ceremony ended, the marriage party moved away, passing so close to the young Friar, who turned so as not to be recognised, that the bride's robe swept that of the monk as she walked by with the step of a Juno.

Presently the church was empty. Salvatore stood musing awhile, and then he too went his way. When he approached his convent, a wish for somewhat prolonged solitude and motion induced him to pass the building and turn into a retired road, that wound up a steep, going towards the fortifications, and the wild country beyond. Half way up the hill was a capacious recess in a ruined wall, overhung by the branches of an olive tree. A stone bench offered pleasant repose; there the young monk sat down, and lost in thought, buried his face in his hands.

At last he looked up, and before him stood—a phantom!—a phantom!—or Lucia.

"Lucia!"

"Salvatore!"

One simultaneous cry, one simultaneous bound, and they are clasped in each other's arms, forgetful of all but love and joy. But, with an equally simultaneous instinct, the next impulse is to repel each other.

"It is then true," at last cried Lucia. "You have forgotten me; you have taken the vows!"

"What else was left for me?" replied Salvatore sternly. "You betrayed me; you are married!"

"Married! Who dared utter such a falsehood?" exclaimed she in indignant wonder. "And you could believe it. Oh! Salvatore!" she added in a tone of heart-broken reproach.

"Is it not true then?" asked the young Friar clenching his hands.

"No, no, no. I have thought of, I have loved but you, each hour, each minute since we parted. I depended upon your promise as one in holy writ. The time came when you were to make your final determination; each day I looked for you or for a letter, but nothing came. I wrote again and again, my words I thought must find response in your

heart, but no sign did you give. At last it was whispered around me that you had taken the vows. I would not believe it. I came to my aunt in Genoa. Day after day I have wandered round and round the convent. I hoped to catch sight of you still a novice; if once you looked upon me again, I was sure you would find courage to refuse the vows. And now—"

"Fool, idiot, that I have been! poor betrayed wretch!" exclaimed Salvatore, stamping and wringing his hands in despair. "And they have made me sinfully, barbarously sacrifice you, my innocent, my faithful Lucia! We have both been most savagely, most wickedly cast into a pit of destruction!"

Then he endeavoured to collect his thoughts, so as to explain to her the series of inventions and forgeries which had brought him to what he was.

"Ah! my dear Salvatore, I see it, you were true, that is a comfort," sobbed out Lucia, "it is they who have cheated you, they have been false and base."

"So false, so base, that Heaven cannot sanction

the hellish lie. In the eye of God a vow based upon such a falsehood is not binding. Before God I am free; before God you are my wife. We will fly together, my Lucia, and we will live and love in some distant land, where we may hide from the fiends in human form, who have torn us asunder."

And he seized and pressed the young girl's hand passionately between both his. Their eyes met and they exchanged one glance of tenderness and hope; but at that instant, the convent bell began to ring. Both started, and Lucia stepped back several paces. Her looks fell upon Salvatore's dark gown and rope girdle, and clasping her hands in agony, she cried:

"Sacrilege! Sacrilege! oh, Salvatore!"

At the turning of the road, above where they stood, some passers by came in sight. Below at the opposite end of the lane, the figure of a Friar was seen crossing towards the convent.

The iron grasp of reality seized upon the two lovers.

"It may not be," whispered Lucia in hurried accents. "God permits us not to be united in

this world. We will meet *there*." And she pointed with outstretched arm to the bright blue sky above. "I will still be true to you. Just beyond your convent is a nunnery; there I will take refuge. The rest of my life shall be spent in prayer, but at least near you, and I shall go and wait for you in heaven."

She gave a farewell wave of the hand, and rushed away down the hill.

Salvatore stood rooted to the spot, and then followed her with frantic haste; he caught sight of her at the gate of the Monastery, saw her hand pull the bell, he ran forward breathless—the ponderous door opened, she passed within, and it closed upon her. The Monk reeled several paces, and then leaned against a wall; his eyes closed in unconsciousness for some moments; when he opened them again, he roused himself by a desperate effort and turned towards his convent.

The superior was in his room, indulging in a quiet siesta, when he was startled by the entrance of one, in whose livid countenance, distorted by passionate agony, he could scarcely recognise Salvatore.

"Were you a party to the infernal deceit practised upon me? Did you know that Lucia was not married?" asked the young Friar in a hoarse voice, but accentuating his question clearly and decidedly.

The superior thrown off his guard by surprise and alarm, could not dissemble his knowledge of the matter, of which, however, he threw the whole responsibility on Signor Gerolamo.

What Salvatore said in the first storm of indignation and rage, he remembers not, he only knows that he was dragged away from the superior's room, still inveighing furiously in language, that brought upon him more than six months solitary confinement.

His state for the first part of the time was one bordering upon madness. Each time he heard the bell from the neighbouring convent, it was like a call from Lucia's voice. Once, at the end of three months, he heard the sad tolling of the passing bell. Great drops of sweat broke out upon his forehead, and he prayed in mortal agony. Something seemed to tell him that Lucia was going from him.

By degrees he recovered some self-possession, but calmer reflection, only shewed him more clearly the hopeless abyss into which he had fallen. He had plenty of leisure to ponder over the chain of incidents, which had led him where he was; to curse his own simplicity, which had never suspected his father of fraud, and to come to the clear conviction, that not only the superior, but several others of the monks had had part in the deceit.

When released from the solitary cell to the more enlarged prison of a cloisteral life, he felt that an eternal chasm of resentment and aversion, and distrust yawned between himself and the men, with whom he was doomed to spend his life.

Shortly he found means to make inquiries and ascertained positively that his heart had told him true. At that moment when he knelt in tortured prayer listening in his prison to the death bell, his Lucia's spirit had passed to a better world.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE young Friar became noted for observing his duties rigorously; this sprung from the proud determination to afford no opportunity of blame to the malice of his Superior, for in the convent, as in the world, it is rare that a man forgives one he has injured.

In the meantime it appears that all those who had plotted against Salvatore, were not to reap the fruit they had expected from their machinations.

A claim of prior possession was brought against Signor Gerolamo Vanni with respect to the land ceded to the convent, as his son's portion. After a law suit, the title was pronounced not valid, the donation to the Capucins became consequently null and void, and the community lost the advantage looked to in the acquisition of Salvatore to their

number. Henceforth he was reckoned as having brought only the trifling sum of money which had been paid for him beside the land. It was not worth having expended so much contrivance for this, thought the long heads of the convent, and their good will did not increase towards their lately acquired brother.

It is a general rule, though by no means invariably observed, that monks go out, not alone, but in couples; now Padre Salvatore often made choice, as companion in his walks, of Fra Tommaso, a lay brother (or servant) of the Capucins; he preferred him, precisely because the humble *Frate* was not admitted into the high councils of the Community, and was therefore innocent of the deadly wrong done the young father. He was a man of a green old age, with a fine long white beard and a pair of brilliant intelligent black eyes.

Salvatore liked the old man's cheerful communicative temper and humourous talk, though occasionally brother Tommaso's oddities would far outstrip discretion.

An ancient custom in Genoa allots to the orders of mendicant Friars the task of weighing all the

firewood landed in the port. This usage, tradition says, was established in order to put an end to the constant violent quarrels which arose between the buyers and the sellers, as to their respective estimate of the weight in purchases of the commodity; the matter was therefore entrusted to a set of impartial persons, possessing the confidence of the public, and the right of levying one piece of wood out of every scaleful is allowed for the benefit of the officiating community. The Capucins, the Franciscans, and the order named *della Sace,* take it by turns, one day each, to fulfil this duty which is performed by two lay brothers, who, with their own hands place the wood in the scale, weigh it, and put aside the due portion for the convent. This operation is carried on upon a certain quay, named in consequence *il Ponte delle Legna,* where all the firewood is landed.

Sometimes Fra Tommaso had to take his turn at the wood. Padre Salvatore had no share in this occupation, exclusively, as we have said, appointed to the Lay brothers; but when his own avocations left him a short leisure, it amused him to spend an hour at the *Ponte della Legna* and watch his old

friend, active, talkative, and jocular, busy with his brawny arms at his task. Besides there was something in the shifting scene of the port, the boats skimming among the forest of shipping, the boatmen lounging or plying a fare, the traders hurrying to and fro, the changing cargoes laden or unladen, that contrasted pleasantly, in the mind of the young Friar, with the monitory of the cloisteral life. A half hour passed here seemed to refresh him, and he would walk back to the convent more cheerily with his humble companion.

The young father had spent one day many hours collecting alms for the community, going from street to street, from house to house, from story to story, gathering at most doors a few halfpence, and followed by a little boy bearing a bag to receive the money, which the Capucin, by the rule of his order, was not permitted to touch. Wearied in spirit by the morning's labour, as he was returning to the convent, his way led near the Port, and he went on to the *Ponte delle Legna*, where he knew Fra Tommaso was on duty. The lay brother's task was not quite finished, and Salvatore seated himself on a bale of goods, his purse bearer

by his side, to wait till they might return together.

He gazed vaguely, now at his busy friend, now at a group of red capped boatmen who were sitting on the edge of the wall, their legs dangling over the water, chatting gaily with animated gestures. One of them, known to the monk by the name of Marco, soon rose, and leaning on an oar as a shepherd might do on his crook, looked out towards the entrance of the Port, and catching sight of a fine vessel coming in, after a moment's observation, he exclaimed:

"The Anna Maria!" All jumped to their feet, turning their eyes with interest upon the brig, with her sails all set, then one by one letting them fall and furling as she came to anchor.

"Padre," said Marco, addressing Salvatore, "that is one of your brother's ships. What a beauty she is! And a beautiful rich cargo she will have no doubt; they say that all that your brother touches turns to gold. Ah! there comes Signor Filippo himself," and the man hurried forward to secure the fare. Filippo came on, light and joyous, as if walking on air, he jumped

into Marco's boat, saying, "Pull away." As the boatman pushed off, the young merchant's eye fell upon the Friar.

"Eh! Salvatore, how do you do?" he cried cheerily, smiling and waving his hand, while the boat glided away. Filippo, gay and radiant, seemed to shine like a beam of light. Salvatore could not but respond to his smile, and to the wave of his hand, and then he watched the skiff as it receded till it disappeared among the shipping.

This was the first time he had seen his brother since the day of his marriage, since that day when . . . . Salvatore felt as if suddenly galvanised, and called anew from long torpor to life and suffering. Every fibre quivered, every former pang burned afresh. Yet, as the shock subsided, a something soothing mixed with the pain, a something to which he clung in spite of himself. Filippo had cast a kind glance at him, a frank, cordial, natural look, so unlike those wherewith the Friar was habitually surrounded in his cold existence, that it penetrated like a warm ray. Salvatore knew that his brother, though bred to the careless selfishness of a spoiled child and pampered

heir, had not a bad heart. The Friar had never for an instant entertained the suspicion that the favoured son had taken part in, or had knowledge of his father's plots, the fruits of which he had reaped it is true, but Salvatore was perfectly aware that all would have appeared to Filippo's unreflecting mind, as just springing out of the natural course of things. Of this he was quite certain. His remembrances flew back to the time when he and his brother played together, two merry children, at their mother's knee, and a gush of tenderness came into his heart.

How happy Filippo looked! Well, all the better! Yet the Friar felt sad and crushed.

So lost was Pedre Salvatore in these thoughts, that he remained immoveable, his eyes fixed on the water, till Fra Tommaso had called him twice to say it was full time to return to the convent.

More than once afterwards Padre Salvatore met his brother, and each time it gave him less of pain and more of pleasure, till at last he would try to pass when he was likely to see Filippo, who always had a gay, kind salutation for him, but was too busy for more. The young merchant was always

flying into *Banchi* (the Exchange) or rushing in or out of the *Porto franco*, or rowing off into the Port. But Padre Salvatore never saw his father, who seemed instinctively to keep out of the way of the son he had injured. This was a relief to the latter.

Salvatore heard constantly on all sides of the daily increasing fortune of his father and brother, of the splendour of the family, and sometimes also of the happiness of Filippo with the beautiful Marchesina, his wife.

One of the young monk's sources of information on these subjects was Fra Tommaso, who bore Padre Salvatore a real attachment in his own way, and delighted in reporting to him all the gossip of the Port and of the town. A talent for collecting news was among the gifts of this worthy, of which he possessed so many and so various, that he was for ever coming out in some new light, often not a little trying to the dignified gravity of his friend, the reverend father, as may be exemplified by the following characteristic anecdote.

"What can be the matter there?" thought

Padre Salvatore, as one morning he entered upon the *Ponte delle Legna*, and hastened forward to see the cause, which had collected a large crowd around something which evidently created a lively interest. It was difficult to penetrate beyond the outer circle of spectators, so looking over the shoulders of those before him, he perceived, to his amazement, Fra Tommaso in most violent altercation with a boatman. Both disputants were so absorbed in the quarrel as to take no thought of who might surround them. Loud and vehement raged the war of words, with an appropriate accompaniment of frantic gesture.

A virulent repartee from the brother, calling forth the laughter of the bystanders, the boatman lost all command over himself and gave the Friar a sounding slap in the face. Fra Tommaso meekly turned the other cheek to his adversary, and received a second blow. A double murmur expressive of the double feeling of sympathy and indignation towards the assaulted and the assaulter ran through the crowd. But in the next instant Fra Tommaso, changing his humble posture, stood erect, and to the surprise of all, threw himself in

the twinkling of an eye on his enemy, seized him with a firm grasp by the collar, gave him half-a-dozen good cuffs and then with a strong jerk sent him rolling in the dust, while a roar of delight pealed loud and merry from the spectators.

Padre Salvatore now pushed his way into the middle of the circle, and catching brother Tommaso by the sleeve cried: "Fra Tommaso! Fra Tommaso! stop. How can you thus forget the precepts of the Gospel?"

At the unexpected sight of the reverend father, the lay brother stood thunder struck, but recovering himself in a moment, he promptly replied:—

"The precept says, if you receive a blow on one cheek turn the other. And so I did; I can tell you that both sides tingle still. But the Gospel says nothing of what may come after."

A general burst of laughter and clapping of hands expressed how keenly the bystanders relished the sally. The conquered boatman slunk away, and Padre Salvatore carried off Fra Tommaso, lecturing him as they went, on the scandal of a Capucin getting into public broils.

Nor was this the only occasion on which the reverend father had to remonstrate against the eccentricities of the worthy *Frate*, yet in spite of all, he could not help holding the hearty old fellow a favourite.

When Padre Salvatore and Fra Tommaso went out together, their humour frequently accorded marvellously well in one respect. By the time they had gone a little way, the lay brother was very apt, under pretext of various calls on business, to part company, appointing some place in which to meet before their return to the convent, thus leaving the young monk to indulge in his dearest recreation, a solitary walk outside the walls of the town. The younger Friar occasionally had to wait at the rendezvous, and on some days he fancied that when the old man did come, his nose was redder than usual; once or twice even it seemed as if his step were unsteady.

Now Fra Tommaso was very fond of talking with a certain pride of a nephew of his, father of the boy we saw accompany Padre Salvatore on his alms-gathering errand. This nephew kept a neat little hostelry near the Port and possessed a

vineyard just out of the town, which yielded first-rate wine, so at least said the brother.

"I am afraid," observed Padre Salvatore once, when Fra Tommaso was running on in his usual way on this subject, "I am afraid that you sometimes taste a little too much of this good vintage, my friend."

"I!" exclaimed the *Frate*, starting back indignant. "I, accused of taking too much good liquor? This is the first I ever heard of it, Padre! I only wish I had a chance of the temptation," continued Tommaso, "I don't promise that I should have the virtue to resist, but my nephew, though a very good nephew in his way, has no notion of giving to the poor *Frate* wine fit for a Bishop; trust him for one who knows how to keep the best for who pays best."

One hot summer evening, some time after this little conversation, Padre Salvatore was loitering under the trees in front of the convent, when he saw Fra Tommaso toiling up the hill coming homewards; in one hand he carried a narrow deep closed tin pail full and weighty with oil, produce of many a housewife's contribution; while over

the other shoulder was slung a large bag of Indian corn meal, filled in the same way.

"You are really overloaded!" exclaimed the young Friar advancing to help the old man, whose brow rained drops of perspiration.

"You may say so indeed," replied the panting lay brother. "All this live long day have I been gathering these alms for the convent. I am done up! My old bones can't stand this long."

Presently the community repaired to the frugal supper of the refectory, and after this, Fra Tommaso retired to rest, groaning with fatigue.

But when the bell rung for midnight prayer, Padre Salvatore remarked that old Tommaso's steps was brisk and his countenance rubicund and complaisant.

Having returned from chapel to complete the night's rest, the excessively sultry air, precursor of a thunder storm, induced Salvatore to leave his door ajar.

Just as he was falling asleep, he fancied he heard sounds from Tommaso's cell. He sat up and listened. It was the old man's voice. Was he ill?

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The Padre rose and went to his neighbour's closed door.

"One hug more, my comfort, my delight, my life."

Such were the words which struck the monk's ear from within the room. He turned alternately cold and hot. Shocked, indignant, and at the same time terrified for the possible consequences of such a delinquency, if discovered by any other than himself, Salvatore retired to bed.

What was Tommaso's astonishment, when, rising as usual before dawn, and leaving his cell, just when he passed that of the young Friar, to be called and addressed thus by him.

"Wretched old man, how dare you indulge your wicked vices within these walls? How venture to expose yourself to the terrible punishment such courses must bring on you?"

"For pity's sake," said Fra Tommaso trembling in every limb, and falling at the feet of Padre Salvatore, "do not betray me! Be merciful!"

"I will not reveal your guilt this time, on the sole condition that never again you desecrate these walls by the presence of a woman."

"A woman!" exclaimed the *Frate* starting to his feet and turning as white as a sheet. "A woman! Why then you must take me for the devil himself! I am a sinner to be sure, but not so bad as that."

And taking the young Friar by the sleeve, he drew him to his cell, opened the door and pulling from under the bed a four gallon demi-john of wine: "There," exclaimed he, "is my crime, but none other."

Brother Tommaso embracing the huge recipient, with a rueful countenance, and deprecating attitude, presented so grotesque a figure, that Salvatore, relieved of his painful suspicions, broke into an irresistible fit of laughter, which at first startled and then re-assured the old man, who soon joined in the mirth.

"But this is no laughing matter," said the young monk soon recovering his gravity, "you drunken fellow, consider what a terrible scrape you would get into, if any body but I had found you out? Why, do you know how you rave?" And he repeated some of the expressions which he had over heard.

"Very wrong of me, miserable sinner, but truly a sup of good wine now and then does just keep my soul and body together, for I am getting weak and stiff, and yet more than ever I have to work, work, work, and tramp, tramp, tramp, the whole blessed day, carrying weights of oil, Indian corn, and what not, enough to break my heart and my back—while you know yourself what our refectory gives to restore a poor creature's strength."

"Why," returned Padre Salvatore smiling, "it must be allowed that our cook helps us on our way to Paradise; but you know, we Capucins, ought to lead a life of mortification."

"Oh! you are young and can bear it," sighed forth Fra Tommaso.

"But do tell me how you managed to smuggle in that huge thing?" inquired the young Friar.

"You shall know all about it," replied Tommaso, whose heart opened under the mingled impression of his late fright, and of the Padre's leniency.

But here the bell for the early service began to ring, and the old man was obliged to put off his

explanation till the community came out of church; Salvatore then learned from him the following details:

Several years back, among certain repairs and alterations made in the cellars of the convent, a passage leading to an ancient back entrance had been walled off. The door of strong oak with a ponderous lock had been double locked, as well as a door of communication leading to the interior of the building; the keys were duly hung on a nail among dozens of others on the wall of the spacious convent store room, and these passages, doors, and keys, having fallen into disuse, were thought of no more.

At a later period Fra Tommaso's nephew became possessed of that capital vineyard already mentioned, and more generous than his uncle had admitted, when talking on a previous occasion of this subject, ("more shame for me," interjected the old man) not only regaled his venerable relative with some of the chosen liquor at the hostelry, but moreover made him a present of a whole demi-john full for his own private use at home. Tantalizing gift! How could the poor

brother ever get this huge forbidden fruit into the convent?

Fra Tommaso's eyes did at times fall with a dim yearning upon the keys of the abandoned passage, which he beheld dangling from their hook in the sanctum, to which he was now and then admitted in the course of his duty, to carry in or out provisions for the community under the superintendance of a Cerberus, a reverend father, who kept the key of this important repository.

"But," thought the lay brother, "of what use would be the keys, even if I had them? The old passage only leads underneath the lane that surrounds the convent wall, into the olive ground of the community, which is just as well walled in, as the cloistered garden. And is not its gate as strong and as well locked as the church door? When you get into our olive ground it is no better than being at the bottom of a well; if they had not been sure of that, they would have had the door of the old passage walled up in spite of its big lock and thick bar."

Many times, when sent into this safely enclosed dependency of the convent to gather olives or

collect wood, did poor Tommaso wistfully glance at the high walls kept in excellent repair, vainly trying to spy some flaw in the strong barrier.

It chanced one day that as resting from toil, he sat at the foot of an olive tree, absorbed in desponding reflections upon his forced separation from his beloved demi-john, his eyes fell on a little dell hard by situated in a corner of the enclosure, near the door of the old passage. On this site had formerly stood an out house, now a heap of ruins overgrown by underwood. From beneath one of the brambles the *Frate* now saw a rat look forth cautiously, and unconscious of the neighbourhood of the man who remained motionless, came on to nibble an olive, then run off with another, presently return for another prize and disappear.

The Friar amused himself for some time in watching the movements of the creature; at last curiosity tempted him to follow its track, which became very evident at a certain point by heaps of the fruit, stones, and shrivelled olives, proving the large booty of the depredator. Seized by the noble passion of the hunter, he cut away some of

the bushes, forced his way through others, and at last, chasing the four footed robber, came unexpectedly upon the tumble down entrance of a low arched stone built room, the sides of which seemed as impenetrable as the wall constructed upon the grassy mound above.

This fabric had formed part of a mill for making oil more than a century back, before the present enclosure was separated from the land beyond, and before, for that purpose, the wall had been erected, which thus had its foundation at this spot upon a little land slip, which had settled over this strong vault, of whose very existence the tradition had been lost.

By dint of examining this little subterranean room, the old man observed a spot where long damp seemed to have loosened the stones; he went to work with a will, and finally made a breach leading into another arched room similar to the first, but still more ruinous, opening, as Tommaso at once perceived, beyond the demesne of the convent into an adjoining olive ground.

Great was his delight, but as great his sudden fear, that some one should come and find out

what he was about. His first care was to hasten back and place two rotten old planks, so as to conceal from observation the opening he had broken out, should an evil chance bring a prying eye thither; and coming out he managed to efface the trace of his passage among the brambles.

It was some time before the *Frate* ventured to return to the spot, but by degrees gathering courage, he snatched moments day by day to survey the resources of the place.

At last he contrived a path, ingeniously hidden among the tall brush wood which concealed the little ruin; and on the other side of the partition wall, a continuation of the bushy dingle afforded equal facility for making a winding way under cover of the coppice.

This outer dell sloped away into a wide piece of olive land, fenced by a low wall, over which, in one corner, a few rude stone steps gave egress and regress. Beyond lay a retired road.

Having thus, as by a miracle, conquered the grand obstacle, Tommaso, inspired by the mighty cause, and no doubt assisted by the spirit of the grape, screwed his courage to the sticking place,

and contrived during a propitious moment, when Cerberus turned his back, to filch the much desired keys.

He carried them forwith to his nephew, who had two false ones made, and three days afterwards the original keys hung once more in their proper place, "and no one the wiser," chuckled the old *Frate.*

Having thus access through the passage, which now seemed set apart for his special convenience, the lay brother easily introduced the precious provision of wine. The precedent was too good not to be followed subsequently, and became an established custom. When the flaggon grew empty, Fra Tommaso would carry it out and leave it hid under his external verdant covered way. When filled again and replaced at night in the same place of concealment, which the old man had made known to his nephew, he took a favourable opportunity of bringing it to his cell.

But these happy days were at an end, now that Fra Tommaso found himself discovered by Padre Salvatore, he fancied the eyes of the whole community upon him, and dared no longer keep the

proof of his misdemeanour. So at night when all were at rest, he begged the Padre to accompany him while he replaced the huge recipient beyond the convent walls.

The lay brother stepping to an obscure corner at the end of a corridor, pushed back a slide, applied a key to a lock, thus brought to light, opened a door, went down a narrow flight of steps, followed by his companion who bore a lamp. They passed along a passage which was terminated by another door, this yielded to the second key, and the two monks found themselves in the walled enclosure. Shading the light, they stepped cautiously over the grassy knotts to the bottom of the little dell; Fra Tommaso shewed the Padre how to thread the ingenious labyrinth he had formed. They went through the two vaulted chambers, and came forth outside the wall under cover of the luxuriant vegetation.

"Here I must leave this," said the old man setting down his burthen. "I shall tell my nephew to-morrow to take it away and bring no more," he added with a sigh. He looked round for a few moments. "See," resumed he, "it

was very convenient, very well contrived." He then made Salvatore place the lamp in a corner of the vaulted room saying: "Now do just step with me and see how easy it was for my nephew to get here. I had done all the difficult clever work," and he laughed a little triumphant laugh.

So he led the Padre across an angle of the field, in which they were, and shewed him the steps which led into a road.

They looked about them a little, the fresh free night wind blowing over them creating a pleasant sensation.

"Come," said Padre Salvatore, at the end of two minutes, "it is full time for us to return, and for you, my good friend, to give up these freaks, which might end very ill for you." So they wended their way back, carefully closing the doors.

As soon as they had reached the young father's cell: "Here, Padre," said Tommaso with a rather dismal look, "take the keys; if I were to keep them I could not answer for myself."

Next morning Padre Salvatore called the old man into his cell, shewed him some packets of

chocolate, a customary and perfectly lawful present from some of his penitents, and insisted on Fra Tommaso drinking a cup of the beverage, at which the old fellow at first made a face. Soon, however, worthy Tommaso got used to this little indulgence, and liked it so well that the young Friar never failed to regale him thus every day, when he had the means. Moreover by his advice the lay brother contrived to ingratiate himself with the reverend father Ignazio, who had the ear of the Superior, and obtained for the old man exemption from much heavy toil.

Thus, chequered only by such trifling incidents of conventual life, few and far between, crept on years of Padre Salvatore's leaden existence.

Now and then he caught sight of his brother hurrying to and fro on his busy avocations, and received from him a happy nod, a cheerful word, a cordial wave of the hand; for the Friar these slight things counted as events. But at last came a time when Filippo, as he passed along hither and thither, no longer looked so bright, his brow seemed full of thought, and not pleasant thought. When the brothers occasionally met,

the young merchant now would almost brush by the Friar without perceiving him, unless Salvatore addressed him.

Fra Tommaso began to report strange observations, which he sometimes heard about the Port. The house of Gerolamo Vanni and Son was said to have left the steady path of business, by which the father had created his fortune. Filippo, it was rumoured, had launched into new and perilous enterprises, and rushed headlong into every kind of speculation.

Some declared he did right, and was becoming master of untold wealth. Others again held up their hands in terror at his rashness, and prophesied inevitable ruin.

There was but one point upon which every body agreed, and that was the boundless extravagance of the Marchesina Geraldina, Filppo's wife. All Genoa talked of her brilliant equipages paraded on the Acqua Sola, her magnificient balls during the Carnival, her splendid country house, her frequent journeys to foreign watering places, her visits to Paris, where it was reported, the Marchesa's

luxury and wild expenses were a subject of remark, even in that gay metropolis.

It was said that Signor Filippo was so distractedly fond of his wife, that he could refuse her nothing; the public also remarked that he went on, no doubt to please her, in his own personal expenses and dashing mode of life.

Mixed with all this, certain hints from viewless tongues seemed to float upon the air, that the Marchesa Geraldina thought more of titles and of epaulettes than of the passionate love of her husband, or of the affectionate duty owed to him by a wife. There were jokes on the flirting lady, and sneers at her credulous lord.

Padre Salvatore knew too well the envious, calumniating spirit of the world, to take such inuendoes for granted, still they sometimes roused painful reflections, which served only to increase the strong aversion he always felt to passing near the palace of his father and his brother. At any time he would willingly go a mile round to avoid the vicinity.

It so happened, however, that one of his peni-

tents lying ill close to that neighbourhood, requested his frequent visits, and he had no choice but to go.

Bent upon this errand one morning, as he approached the abode of his brother, a lady issued from the lofty portal; he had seen her only once, but he recognised instantly her queen-like bearing and strikingly handsome features. She went only a few steps, and then entered a neighbouring church. The Friar followed his way, which led him out of the main street into a narrow one, branching off at right angles, and running along one side of that church the lady had entered.

As the monk turned into this lane of tall houses, he saw a military man walking before him whose boots and spurs sounded upon the pavement, then having gone about fifty paces, he turned about and paced back again, as if waiting for some one.

"A handsome fellow, with a great deal of dash about him," thought the Friar, and as he turned the corner of another small street, he cast a glance after the young officer, and saw the same lady, who had come forth from his brother's house,

glide out of the side door of the church, look to the right and to the left, as if to ascertain that she was not watched, and hasten to meet the young man. The pair walked together up the lane, and crossed the end of the street where the Capucin then was standing, at the door of the house to which he was bound.

This incident produced so painful a shock on Padre Salvatore's mind, and he felt so strong a repugnance to acting the part of even an involuntary spy, that before leaving his penitent, he fixed for his visit next day a totally different hour.

In the mean time he sought in his mind all possible ways of giving an innocent explanation to what he had seen. To his relief he reached his penitent's house for several days running, without perceiving any trace of either of the persons whose meeting had so much startled him; he persuaded himself at length that this was a mere casual occurrence, and he dismissed the subject from his thoughts, the more easily that his avocations in the vicinity of his brother's house had ceased.

So he went on in recovered tranquility till a new circumstance happened again to ruffle him.

Late one afternoon, returning from a walk with Fra Tommaso, Padre Salvatore and his companion sat down to rest, and while away half-an-hour, before the *Ave Maria*, under the pleasant shade of some trees in a retired part of the Acqua Sola. The lay brother dozed in the mild evening air, and the reverend father lookod out upon a distant peep of the sea.

Presently a female figure passed close to the stone bench, on which reposed the two Friars, the person was veiled but Salvatore knew her at once. She walked on with a slow deliberate step, till she came to a parapet not far off, stood still, apparently absorbed by the view, then seated herself on a bench.

"Fra Tommaso," said the Padre in a low voice, gently waking the old man, "it is time to go in." The *Frate* started, rose and followed the young monk.

As they descended some steps leading out of the garden, an officer entering with eager step ran against them.

"What a monstrous hurry he is in," observed Tommaso testily, looking after him.

Padre Salvatore did not turn his head; he had but too well recognised the young man.

"It is possible, just possible, that it is not her he is going to meet," thought the young Friar. "Who knows? She may be waiting for Filippo; her husband even now may have joined her. Presumptive evidence should not be too lightly admitted."

Still he felt much disturbed.

Instinctively avoiding the Acqua Sola next day, he turned his steps for a solitary stroll in an opposite direction, following the road that led up the hill towards the country; it was the same lane where some years before he had for the last time seen Lucia.

He went on slowly, pondering over many things, till he came to the recess we have mentioned already. As he passed he turned his head—and lo! there sat the couple that seemed to haunt his path. The young officer held one of the lady's hands in one of his, the other arm was round her waist.

He no sooner caught sight of the Capucin, than he drew back with a hasty motion, rose, assumed an indifferent air, and began whistling a popular melody.

His companion still more startled, left her seat hurriedly, and stepped rapidly down the hill, the officer by her side.

The monk passed on in an opposite direction, his eyes fixed on the ground.

There could be no longer any doubt. Filippo's wife was not an innocent object of malevolent slander, she was in truth, if not guilty, on the very verge of guilt.

"But what had he," thought the Friar, "cast off as he had been by his family, to do with that? Was he after so many years of severance, from a mistaken notion of interest for his brother, to inspire a husband's mind with resentment and distrust? Would it not be better to find means of speaking a warning in the ear of a young creature who might yet be saved?"

Such were the ideas the Padre ruminated during the rest of the day, and which mingled with his dreams when he fell into a troubled sleep.

The *Ave Maria* bell which marks the dawn of day had scarcely done sounding, when Padre Salvatore went forth to clear his thoughts and cool his head in the fresh air.

As usual, when disturbed, he sought the accustomed retired path up the hill. He had not gone far when he was startled by a clashing sound; he hurried forward, and at a sharp turning in the road, caught sight of two men in deadly fight with swords, while three others stood looking on.

One of the combatants was a military man; his face was turned towards Salvatore, who recognised at once the officer he had seen already three times, and the day before near the same spot. In the next instant, he beheld him sink back and fall to the ground. The bystanders closed round the wounded man, then one left the group and ran forward to meet the Friar, calling out: "Padre! Padre! hasten to a dying man."

Another moment and Salvatore stood beside his brother, pale and haggard gazing upon his work of death. Filippo's eye caught his.

"Oh, Salvatore!" he exclaimed in a low deprecating voice, "he was her seducer!"

Filippo's second now pulled him by the sleeve, observing: "It is time for you and me to think of ourselves."

"Run to our convent close by," said the Friar aloud, "and ask assistance for a wounded man; tell them Padre Salvatore sent you." Then he whispered in his brother's ear: "Afterwards slip into the church and wait for me in a retired corner. I will come to you later."

Filippo nodded assent, and hastened away with his friend. Then the monk addressed himself to help the surgeon, and the second to staunch the blood, and soon bent to receive the confession of the dying man.

Presently they were joined by several monks, and the wounded officer was gently removed to the convent. In the meantime groups of country people coming into town had gathered round with vehement exclamations, and then went on to spread the news, that Captain Count Enrieo Montallo was wounded or killed.

The police was on foot in a moment and surrounded the neighbourhood of the spot, in which the combat had taken place, within a few minutes

after the wounded man was laid upon a bed in the infirmary of the Capucin convent, where he speedily breathed his last.

Padre Salvatore had no sooner left the bed of death, than he was obliged to go to his place in the choir for morning service. He cast an anxious look into the body of the church, and was relieved to catch an indistinct glimpse of Filippo bending in the shade of a confessional.

Heaven knows how that chaunted service sounded in the ear of the man who had blood upon his hand, and who knew not but his own life might be the forfeit.

At length the monks left the church. A few minutes after Salvatore returned and contrived to lead Filippo unseen to his own cell.

Here the two brothers sat down and looked at each other with that blank grave look of confused acceptance, which a sudden and irretrievable calamity imposes.

"Dead?" asked Filippo, as if not sure he had heard aright.

"Dead," replied Salvatore with sorrowful quiet.

A long pause ensued.

Then Salvatore said:

"You must remain here till night; the police officers are all about this neighbourhood at present."

"Suppose," suggested his brother, with sudden terror, casting his eyes around, "they were to come here, I do not see a corner to hide me in this naked white-washed room."

"They are not likely to come here," answered the Friar calmly, "but if they did, I would put you in safety, and I have already set one on the look out, who would warn us in time."

Padre Salvatore had in this emergency trusted to Fra Tommaso, who was at that moment acting as scout.

They now began to consider what steps could be taken to facilitate Filippo's escape from the kingdom, for the Montallo were a powerful family and would not fail to follow up active measures against the slayer of their kinsman.

The young merchant bethought him of an American vessel in the Port, which was, he knew, about to leave that evening for Montevideo, and with whose Captain he was well acquainted. It

was presently agreed that Padre Salvatore should go, and according to his brother's instructions, endeavour to arrange with the American for a passage.

The monk, first leaving all necessary orders with Fra Tommaso for keeping his brother in safe concealment, as soon as the mid-day meal in the refectory was over, sallied forth and by a circuitous route made his way to the quay.

A vague report of a terrible event in which Signor Filippo was concerned, was already circulating in the purlieus of the Port. Marco, whom Salvatore's eye sought, was in the midst of a group at that very moment, discussing the subject. All suddenly became silent, looking at the Friar with a mixed expression of sympathy and awe. Salvatore went straight to Marco's boat, and desired him to row to the opposite side of the Port.

The boatman had not pulled ten strokes before the vehement expression of his concern and anxiety about Signor Filippo spared the Friar all preface, and he found Marco full of zeal, intelligence and readiness. Indeed the prospect of

serving his patron in danger, and of baulking the carabineers and coastguards of their prey, were for him just nuts to crack.

"Signor Filippo's wife has no excuse," cried Marco, "her husband being so handsome, rich and spirited as he is. I'll tell you what it is, he is too generous. If I had been in his place, I should have taken a good stick to the Signora long ago, and that might have kept her straight, that jackanape's skin whole, and Signor Filippo quiet at home. But gentlemen settle their matters otherwise, and he's a true gentleman, that's what he is."

This speech Marco made as he directed his boat towards the shore, in the neighbourhood of an obscure public house well known to him, where he left Padre Salvatore till he presently brought the Captain of the American vessel to confer with the Friar.

The gentleman deplored the occurrence, of which he had already heard, and expressed the pleasure with which he should give a berth to his friend. He suggested however the possibility of search being made on such an occasion on board

a ship outward bound, before her leaving the Port; it was therefore considered prudent that the Louisiana should leave the harbour without her passenger, and then under cover of the night lay to till Marco should convey Filippo along side of her. All necessary details to this end were soon settled between the Captain, Salvatore, and the boatman, to whom the Padre committed the care of procuring some apparel and other requisites for his brother, which the American undertook to take on board. For this, as for the passage, the monk settled from a portfolio, with which Filippo had entrusted him. He also employed Marco to procure a flask of wine and some cold provisions, which, hid under the ample folds of his dress, he carried back to restore the strength of the temporary captive.

On returning to his cell, the young Friar found his brother in a state of great depression.

"For heaven's sake!" said Filippo, "let me get out of this place. I cannot bear feeling myself within a few yards of the man I have killed. I shall go mad."

"A little patience, my dear fellow; all is settled you will go this evening."

"Oh, but the hours till then! Come, Salvatore, do lend me an old gown of yours; I will wrap my head in the hood; no one will guess me under that disguise."

"You do not know what you are talking of; I do not possess half-a-dozen gowns as you do waistcoats. Each year a dress is given to us, and the old one taken away. If I gave you this I have on, I must stay without clothes in bed, and in half-an-hour, when I am to be in my place in church, our secret would be discovered."

"What a horrid life! What a hideous place! I could not live here a week."

"Necessity and habit do much," replied Salvatore quietly, "I have been here five years."

"You have been indeed horribly sacrificed, Salvatore!" exclaimed Filippo, as if for the first time awakened to the fact. "And all to end in this!" he added after a moment's pause, burying his face in his hands.

The young Friar strove to calm his brother, and succeeded in diverting his mind by explaining the arrangements made for his departure, then insisted that Filippo should take some wine and

refreshment. Later Salvatore went in search of Fra Tommaso, who prudently and unobserved fulfilled the office of watch dog.

He reported that one of the Carabineers had cursorily looked into the church, but that it did not appear to strike anyone, that the tracked man was likely to be found in the same building, where lay the victim; nevertheless, some guards were posted about the convent, and one in the lane between the garden and the olive ground of the community.

When the monk returned from the afternoon service, he asked Filippo whether he had no instructions to leave for his father, with respect to sending remittances.

"My dear fellow, I have taken good care of myself," replied his brother. "I have on me a belt and waistcoat well lined with gold and available paper. I felt that things might go as they have done, and before leaving home I provided for eventualities; I shall do, if I can but get out there. The house of Gerolamo Vanni and Son must go to the devil. I suppose my father may get some pickings for himself.—As for *her*—let

her return to her father, as she came to me, penniless, with no other portion than her fatal beauty—to which add a husband's curse."

At last night came. The Friars retired to rest; and Salvatore drawing forth the keys, which he had formerly received from Fra Tommaso, led his brother to the secret passage. He peremptorily forbid the lay brother accompanying them, not choosing to expose the old man to any risk attaching to the adventure. So Tommaso, sore against his will, remained waiting in his own room.

When the Padre, followed by his brother, had descended the steps and gone on to the second door, which opened as easily as the first, he carefully shaded the lamp and paused before stepping forth. The subterranean way from which the brothers were about to issue, passed under and had brought them out beyond the lane surrounding the convent garden. They heard the steps of the sentry on the other side of the wall of the enclosure in which they now were; they held their breath and stepped cautiously over broken clods to the little dell, threaded the bushes, passed through the arched rooms, and came out

into Fra Tommaso's green-covered way, beyond the limits of the community.

Salvatore placed his lamp safe in an angle of the arches, and then led across the open ground to a spot, where it had been agreed that Marco should wait.

The young Friar bid his brother wait under cover of some trees, while he went on by the vague light of a clouded moon. Presently Salvatore imitated the cry of a night bird, he was answered by a similar sound, and the boatman started forth from where he lay concealed, whispering: "Here I am, the coast is quite clear."

Salvatore went and brought Filippo.

"Now, *Padrone,*" said Marco in a low tone, "take off your hat, we will fling it over some garden wall, and put on this fisherman's cap," and he drew one from his pocket, then threw his own jacket over the young merchant's shoulders. "That's it," observed the boatman, "I warrant you we get safe to San Pier d'Arena, where my boat is waiting beyond those devils of coast guards."

There was a moment of silence, during which

the night wind sighed mysteriously through the trees.

"Now then let's be off," urged Marco, "we must not lose time."

The brothers embraced; it was the first time for years; it was the last time in their lives.

"Pray for me, Salvatore!"

"From my heart," answered the Friar. The next moment Filippo and his guide had disappeared in the darkness. The slight sound of their cautious footsteps died away, and Padre Salvatore returned through the passage of which he secured the doors to his now once more solitary cell, till Frate Tommaso burst in impatiently with: "Is all right?"

Two days past before the monk ventured near the Port; when he did he found on the watch for him Marco, who passing with his usual salutation, whispered: "All's well!" and slipped into the monk's hand a crumpled piece of paper; it bore neither superscription nor signature; only these words in Filippo's hand writing.

"In safety; sailing with a fair wind for the New World. You have been my guardian angel,

while I . . . . but no use in words, farewell.—I am sorry for the old man."

Some months later the Friar received a letter from his brother, giving news of his prosperous voyage and arrival at Montevideo. After that he never heard of him more.

When the fatal duel and Signor Filippo's disappearance became ascertained facts, long impending ruin fell with a crash upon the commercial house of Gerolamo Vanni and Son.

Signora Geraldina, pouring forth invective and recrimination on her husband and his father, clutched from the general wreck all she could seize upon, which was not much, and returned to the house of her father, who, not long after, died, leaving only an inheritance of debt.

Nevertheless the Marchesa Andriani, (Geraldina dropped her husband's name for that of her family) contrived to lead still a gay and brilliant life, to which contributed, it was said, some lavish admirers of her undiminished beauty and attractions.

Signor Gerolamo remained with a pittance insufficient to furnish the bare neceesaries of life.

In his distress he turned to his younger son, told him his tale of misery and implored help.

At sight of the broken, helpless, wretched old man, Salvatore's long nursed resentment melted, giving way to grave pity and Christian forgiveness. He was almost grateful for being drawn out of himself.

But what could a poor monk do, the rule of whose order even forbids to touch money?

Salvatore obtained some writing to copy, and he gave some Latin lessons, requesting that the poor remuneration might be paid to his parent. Thus he earned for the miserable old man wherewithal to live, and to procure also some comforts during a long last illness.

These events had upon the young Friar the good effect of awakening him from long sullen torpor to a sense of active duty.

When his father died, Salvatore had been seven years a monk. The haze of time was settling upon the sorrows and the resentments of his youth, and he began to reflect with a man's mind upon what he ought henceforth to make of the existence which was irrevocably his. It was then that he

fell into the same train of thought as that in which I have lately indulged, with respect to what the life of a cloister ought to be. He turned his aspirations to God, he prayed to be directed, and now truly from his heart, laid his whole being at the foot of the altar.

He sought to obliterate in his soul every personal passion or feeling, to work solely for others on earth; to dwell for comfort and for strength on the thought of a divine Father in Heaven, and a blessed future life.

As these ideas grew in his mind and took root, he sometimes partly communicated them to one or two of his companions, Friars who had come into the community later than himself.

One of these friends having laid down in full refectory the saintly doctrine as his own, all present, the Superior included, declared entire concurrence and edification.

But these professions, like brilliant soap-bubbles, are as apt in the cloister as in the world, to vanish at the slightest breath of interest. Theory and practice are often at variance within as without the walls of a convent.

Padre Salvatore told me several anecdotes, placing this truth in a striking point of view, and he was about to relate with some detail one story especially, of which the thread was interwoven with that of his own life for several years, when the bell for afternoon service summoned him to church. But we appointed to meet again as soon as his duties left him free, and before the Ave Maria called him home for the night, he finished the remainder of his narrative.

CHAPTER IX.

THE last year of Signor Gerolamo's life had been spent in the house of a worthy widow, Signora Teresa, who with her two sons and her daughter, softened the declining days of the old merchant by kind and unfailing care. These four good souls entertained a deep veneration for the young Friar, son of their lodger, and never failed, do what he might to avoid it, to greet his entrance into the house by devoutly kissing his hand.

Padre Salvatore felt great gratitude towards the widow and her family for all the comfort they had bestowed upon his father, after whose death he kept up a frequent friendly intercourse with them.

Signora Teresa kept a small shop of haber-

dashery; her son Andrea was an engraver on steel, her daughter took in mantua maker's work. As to Giuseppe the youngest, he went to school and was too young to fix yet on a calling.

There was a spirit of cheerful, loving harmony in this little group of persons which gave sunshiny feelings to all who came within their humble circle. The room was always neat, the muslin curtains snow white, the flower pot in the window ever fresh, Marietta's hair smooth and glossy, her and her mother's *pezzotto* (or white veil) freshly ironed when they went to church, and Signora Teresa's face smiling and benevolent would have set off a less cheerful abode.

It was refreshing to Padre Salvatore's spirit, to spend sometimes an hour or two with these kind people; he loved to chat with Andrea over his engraving, to help Giuseppe in his lesson, to look at Signora Teresina's motherly countenance, and to exchange words of good will with her and her daughter, as the latter sat at her work, and the former snatched moments for chat from the occupations of the shop or the house. Nor was the Friar long before he discovered that a certain

handsome worthy youth, Alessandro by name, whom he often met at the house, aspired to the pretty girl's hand, which was promised him, whenever the young couple might be able to put together wherewithal to set up in the world.

Alessandro was a merchant's clerk, his stipend was too narrow yet to maintain a wife; his employers however had great confidence in him, and had already sent him out once in one of their vessels as supercargo. The young man lived in hopes that a few more such voyages, with a little venture of his own, at the same time, would enable him to marry. It was evident that the young people were much attached to each other.

"Would that I could give my poor Marietta a modest portion," said the widow one day to the Friar, with a sigh, "that they might not go on waiting so long."

By degrees Padre Salvatore remarked, that the mother's countenance lost much of its cheerfulness, and that she often fell into fits of unconscious abstraction, when an expression of painful anxiety would gather on her brow.

The open-hearted creature made little difficulty

in confiding to the monk the cause of her uneasiness. Beside her regret at not being able to hasten her daughter's marriage, she was still more deeply disturbed by the idea that her eldest son Andrea was close upon his twentieth year, and that should he draw a low number for the conscription, she had not the means to provide for a substitute. The savings which had been made with that view, when the youth was a mere child, had all melted away in the long illness of the widow's late husband.

Talking thus unreservedly of her family affairs, Signora Teresa chanced to tell the Capucin, that she was born in a superior position in life to the one in which he now saw her.

She was the daughter of a wealthy notary. Her father died when she was a young child, and left her and her fortune to the guardianship of a merchant, rich then, but whose affairs subsequently fell into disorder. This fact, however, became known only long afterwards.

The little Teresa was sent to a convent for education. Once or twice a year she was brought to the grating of the parlour, to receive a stately

visit from her guardian, whose loud voice and pompous manner awed her, and once a year (at Christmas) she wrote him a formal letter with the compliments of the season.

When she was seventeen, she was surprised at being suddenly told that she was to leave the convent, and go to her guardian's house. The day after her arrival there, a stiff gentleman dressed in a black coat and white cravat, looking, to her judgment, old enough to be her father, was presented to her as Signor Lorenzo Bertaldi, the future husband selected for her by her guardian, and, in fact, a week later they were married.

Shortly after her marriage, her guardian left Genoa for South America, and neither she nor her husband had ever heard of him again.

In the confidence of married life, Teresa subsequently learned from Signor Lorenzo many particulars, of which, in her inexperience, she had not entertained the slightest suspicion. Imprudent or unfortunate speculations had brought her guardian to real though concealed ruin; he had staved off pressing difficulties by using part of his ward's fortune, and he became much disturbed, as

the girl was growing into womanhood, at the thought of being some day called to account for the embezzled property.

Chance threw in his way what appeared to him a fortunate escape. One of his clerks yielded to a tempting opportunity of committing a fraud against his Patron, who made the discovery, but when the defenceless culprit gave himself up for lost before the impending punishment, his injured employer admitting the force of certain extenuating circumstances, not only consented to overlook the guilt, but offered to the offender his ward in marriage with a small portion.

Lorenzo was too happy to exchange merited punishment for a young wife with a little money, to hesitate about the prescribed terms, though he was not without a notion that the girl he married ought to be entitled to considerable wealth. It was a tacit agreement, that the condition of the mercy shewn after an offence, of which the proofs still remained in the hands of his patron, was that the husband should ignore the claims of the ward upon her guardian. Another wish was also expressed, to which the faulty clerk immediately

acquiesced; it was that he and his wife should leave Genoa at once. They settled at Savona, from which town Signora Teresa only returned to her native place after the death of her husband. As we have said, almost immediately after her marriage, her guardian went to South America, and had been lost sight of completely. Lorenzo found opportunities of ascertaining, though fruitlessly, that his wife had been defrauded of a considerable patrimony, the largest part of which her guardian had carried off on leaving the country.

"Poor Lorenzo," added Teresa, "he was very penitent for the evil action he had committed, and which thus put him in the power of his patron, I suppose that it was that which made his temper so sour; he himself said it was a retribution of Providence which prevented his undertakings from prospering. Certain it is that we strove and struggled, but never got on very well. However, we brought up the children honestly, and gave them a decent education; there does not live a more honourable man than my Andrea. One may be content without being rich, but the misfortune was we were not able to avoid making a few debts,

which are not yet paid off; and what weighs upon me is the thought of the conscription for my poor boy. If Signor Antonio Pontremolo, my unfaithful guardian, had only left me wherewithal for that, I would willingly have forgiven him the rest of the wrong."

Salvatore fell into a fit of musing. He had among his penitents an old man, extremely devout and a frequent benefactor of the Capucin convent, for which he evinced great attachment. The Friar knew that this man was wealthy and not many years returned from foreign countries. Further inquiry from the widow made it pretty clear, that this was no other than her long absent guardian, and Padre Salvatore undertook to speak to him, in the interest of his former ward.

The Friar called next day on Signor Antonio, and was received by him with the oily caressing courtesy, the old man always shewed to every member of the community, and especially to his father confessor.

The Padre led cautiously to the subject he had in his mind, but no sooner had he uttered the name of Teresa Bertaldi, than his listener took

fright and declared the claim null by lapse of time.

Salvatore, without admitting this, did his best to obtain a calm hearing; but Signor Antonio, though implicitly confirming the widow's story by the very subterfuge to which he had resource to get out of the subject, made so many windings and doublings, that it was very difficult to bring, and still more so, to keep him to a point. When the Capucin strove to fix his attention upon the wrong done to his ward, the old gentleman would fly off at a tangent to the ill practices of his quondam clerk, of which he still had the proofs in his desk, and then to his own generosity in forgiving him. Strange are the workings of the human mind; the man had so often laid that flattering unction to his soul, that he had persuaded himself into the belief of having returned good for evil, and acted a part of clemency.

The monk pointed out the error gently, and with great moderation put the facts in their true light.

Signor Antonio fell into the greatest perturbation, as the bare idea of restitution shot across his

mind, though Padre Salvatore had not yet uttered the word, and when he did, contrived that it should be proceeded by the assurance that he would answer for it, the widow would be satisfied with the refunding of a very small portion of what she had lost.

Now the old man travelled off into invectives against the ingratitude and want of faith of Lorenzo's family. What business had they to call up again a matter, settled years ago to the satisfaction of all parties?

How had they dared to come to Genoa? It was very hard, a poor man who had toiled twenty years in foreign lands, could not come home and prepare to die quietly in his own country, without being hunted by unconscientious spiteful people.

Again Padre Salvatore went over the same ground, and brought back Signor Antonio to the same proposition; the moral obligation of restitution towards the despoiled. At last, hedged in on every side by the arguments of the Capucin, the old man gave up the point, and consented to pay a certain sum, provided Signora Teresa would sign a release in full of all claims.

The Friar readily undertook the negotiation, and on leaving Signor Antonio, he hastened to his friends with news, which surpassed even their fondest dreams of prosperity.

Much was Salvatore surprised the next morning by a summon to attend the Superior, who sitting majestically in his chair with a very cloudy brow, rebuked the young Friar for the harshness, which Signor Antonio complained of having met with from him on the preceeding day.

The Superior had paid a visit to the old gentleman shortly after the departure of the young Padre, had found him in a state of great agitation, arising, averred the Superior, from the severity of father Salvatore's views ; then he went on to say that it was very distressing to see so worthy a person, and so generous a benefactor of the convent, thrown into so painful a state of mind, by one of the community.

Padre Salvatore related the widow's story His account was clear and temperate, and the Superior found it difficult to answer.

At last he said : " It is but Christian charity to suppose the other party has something to say in his defence."

"Signor Antonio neither denies nor can extenuate the facts," replied the young man, and then he went on to give an exact summary of the conversation which had taken place, ending with: "all I ask of him is the restitution of a very moderate portion of what he really owes, to which he has in fact consented."

"He says you extorted this."

"Simply by gently pointing out the thing as a sacred duty, as you, my father, or any other conscientious man would have done."

"All very right," replied the Superior hastily, "but this man is old, his health is delicate, he has a very tender conscience, and you have disturbed him too much. If he has sinned in former years, he atones now by piety, and munificence for holy purposes." As an instance in point, the Superior went on to remind Salvatore, how generous a benefactor to the convent was Signor Antonio Pontremolo, surely he ought not to be ungratefully disgusted by one of their own number. "After all," added he, "this is a business fitter to be discussed by lawyers than churchmen, whom it did not become to meddle too much in temporal concerns."

Padre Salvatore begged to submit humbly that the Father Superior himself had often impressively asserted, that the church was a refuge and a protection for the widow and the orphan.

The Superior sharply rebuked the young Friar for the spiritual pride, that led him to argue where he ought deferentially to obey, and ended by a peremptory order to the Padre ever again to put his foot in Signor Antonio's house, or even to address that gentleman if he chanced to meet him. "Let that woman and her family look after their own affairs; the father does not seem to have left a memory such as to make his wife and children very interesting, and still I am persuaded that Signor Antonio will now do all that is right." The Superior then intimated to Padre Salvatore, that he was to devote the next week in going rounds to beg for the convent. "In this way, at least," (thus terminated the angry harangue), "you will in some measure atone for the neglect I regret to see in your mind for the interests of the community."

Padre Salvatore, "son of holy obedience," as it is termed, could but bow his head and follow the commands laid upon him.

He contrived only, passing next morning near Signora Teresa's house, to step in for a moment and explain the state of things which obliged him to give up protecting her interests in this affair. At the same time he urged her going to Signor Antonio Pontremolo in person, accompanied by her son and daughter, and endeavour to have the old gentleman's proposal carried.

She followed the advice, but a meeting, with his old ward and her children in the absence of the monk, was quite a different thing, for Signor Antonio to a claim backed and urged by his confessor.

In presence of the Bertaldi he recovered all his worldly keenness, his worldly passions. He treated his visitors as unfortunate beggars, kindred of an ungrateful dishonest descendant. Let them try their claim at law, with all his heart. He should feel it his duty, not only to himself but to his heirs, to defend himself.

Note that the old man had no relations nearer than a third or fourth cousin, whom he had never seen, and that the sum in question was not a hundredth part of his large property. As a

warning hint to one who had been his ward, he would advise Signora Teresa to take care what she was about, for if her means were so small as she said, a tenth part of the expenses of a law suit would leave her probably without a bed to lie on. He ended by offering as an alms, a hundred francs, which he laid upon the table, and which Andrea pushed back indignantly, saying that, "his mother came to seek justice not charity."

The old man afterwards often recounted this trait to his friends, as a proof that these people wanted for nothing, and were puffed up with pride.

Signora Teresa consulted a lawyer on the case, from whom she heard, in kinder words, the same prospect laid before her, which Signor Antonio had threatened; observing that in a struggle with a rich man, who could exhaust every resource of the law, she would be completely ruined before an ever doubtful decision could be obtained.

And so there was no more to be thought about it.

When Andrea drew for the conscription, he got

a bad number, and had to join, first the depot, and then his regiment.

The widow strove for some time to keep up her shop, but one of her creditors, pressing at length for immediate payment, she was obliged to sell off, and retired to an obscure lodging, where she took in plain work, while her daughter went out by the day to a mantua maker's. A distant relation of her husband's, a vicar in the country, offered to take charge of the little Giuseppe, and even at the cost of separation, his mother was fain to have the child provided for.

Signor Teresa and her daughter living now in a quarter very distant from the convent, the Friar had much fewer opportunities of calling at their new abode, and by degrees he nearly lost sight of them.

Signor Antonio Pontremolo continued to be a munificent patron of the convent, and a special friend of the Superior, by whose suggestion he took Padre Ignazio as confessor.

There was, however, something spontaneously working within Padre Salvatore's mind at this period, which bore him up amid all these disap-

pointments, checks and mortifications. He became conscious of a growing power of eloquence, which impelled him to teach with terror the word of God, and began to make him popular in the pulpit.

But preachers no less than poets are an *irritabile genus*, and the rising frame of Padre Salvatore's discourses greatly disturbed two of his brethren, Padre Ciro and Padre Paolo, who till now had been accounted the most eloquent ornaments of the community. Both were protected by Padre Ignazio, who, as before hinted, was a chief favourite with the Superior.

The thorny questions of the navigation of the Danube, and of the Principalities have not occasioned more intense cogitation, or more subtle diplomatic combination, than those which were devoted by the above venerable trio to keeping the rival genius in the shade.

Padre Salvatore had given himself for some time in his leisure hours to the study of the best models of sacred eloquence, upon which he diligently sought to form his own style, busily making notes and extracts, setting down his own thoughts

or sketching discourses and essays on various subjects. The pursuit had great charm for him.

One day, on returning to his cell, he was amazed to find that his books and manuscripts had disappeared. The explanation of the fact was not long delayed; he was summoned into the room of the Superior, on whose table lay the missing articles.

The Superior said he considered it right to examine the nature of the studies, to which Padre Salvatore had been observed for some time past to addict himself. His papers shewed nothing absolutely wrong, still so much knowledge was not necessary for a Capucin, it might indeed become a snare and lead to worldly vanity, and also to spiritual pride, which was his dear son Salvatore's besetting sin; the Padre was still very young to use his pen with any profit, and the Superior *advised* (to advise and to order were the same thing in this case) advised him to avoid such temptations.

So Salvatore had to burn the poor written sheets, which had been the pleasant silent companions of many solitary hours. His books remained with the Superior.

Not long after this, one of the Padre's best friends, Don Camillo, Rector in a neighbouring provincial town, being about to have a new church consecrated in his parish, wished the discourse on that occasion to be pronounced by father Salvatore, so he not only asked of him the favour, but duly applied to the Superior for his permission thereunto, which was graciously granted sometime before that fixed for the ceremony.

Shortly it came to be known, that Padre Salvatore's sermon was to be delivered in presence of the Bishop Indeire.

"No wonder he studied as he did," observed Padre Ciro, "if he is to preach before Bishops!"

"The airs he will give himself!" joined in Padre Paolo.

The fact which called forth these remarks, was, we may own, provoking; but what was to be done? The thing was settled, the Superior had given his authorization, (Padre Ignazio was sure it must have been got by some unfair means) but for all that, Padre Salvatore had it.

Then these three monks, with a skill, ingenuity and patience, worthy a better cause, set them-

selves secretly to work a change in, what appeared to them, so intolerable a state of affairs.

Through long and tortuous windings, they succeeded in getting hold of the Bishop's secretary, and in obtaining from him to mention in his lordship's presence, the eloquence of Padre Ciro. This drew, as was expected, from the Bishop, good easy unsuspecting man, the expression of a hope that this might be the Capucin, whose discourse was to grace the approaching consecration. The words had no sooner fallen from the reverend lips, than the secretary hastened to notify them to Don Camillo.

On the receipt of this semi-official letter, the vicar was placed in a painful dilemma, between ungraciously refusing to comply with the episcopal desire, or unpleasantly and ungratefully withdrawing from his friend an office he had accepted from pure kindness.

It may be mentioned to the honour of Don Camillo, that he did hesitate eight and forty hours, and it is to this day uncertain how he might have decided, but that an officious friend, without consulting him, came and stated the case as it was to

Padre Salvatore, who instantly wrote to the rector giving up all claim to the intended honour, and urging him to invite forthwith Padre Ciro, according to the wish of *Monsignore*.

However, Don Camillo, touched by this, could not be satisfied unless he would at least promise to preach in his church a course of sermons during Lent, to which Padre Salvatore readily consented. But here the conventual trio were before hand with him. When the vicar sent his request to the Superior, he received for answer, that although with great regret, it must be refused, for that the Padre was already promised in another place.

And the Friar was sent to deliver his instructions during Lent, that year, in some distant obscure country parishes.

Those who were cause of this, would have enjoyed their triumph less than they did, if they could have guessed how soon he took a real interest and pleasure in this humble work.

He went into the cottages, caressed the children, chatted with the mothers, conversed with the men of their interests, sat at their humble meals, and soon ingratiated himself every where. In these

respects he did what every other Capucin would have done, more or less. It is the familiar footing of equality and fellowship, which makes that order so generally popular among the poorer classes.

But Padre Salvatore was a man of easy flowing sympathies, and strong practical observation, he quickly interested himself and came to understand the population.

They flocked to his pulpit and to his confessional. He found among them lamentable ignorance of the first elements of right and wrong, with a superstition so gross as nearly to exclude all real religion; yet had they sterling qualities, shrewd sense, vivid imagination, strong domestic affections, and a certain gentleness of nature which rendered them pliantly tractable in the hands of those, who knew how to win their confidence.

Their almost adoration of a monk gave the good Padre a hold upon them, of which he made use to instil into their minds some juster notions of piety and morality, and insist upon practice being somewhat guided by these principles.

He left that part of the country with a distinct

knowledge of the wants of his flock, a perception of how to go to work with them, and a consciousness of having already done some good.

He promised these poor people, and himself also, that he would return, and already shadowed out many plans for their advantage. He reflected too with considerable satisfaction, that no one would contend with him for this lowly field of labour.

On quitting this rural district, his road to Genoa lay through the town, near which lived that relation of Signora Teresa, who had adopted her Giuseppe. The Capucin tarried there a couple of hours to visit the boy; found him grown tall and stout, in good health, kindly treated, yet still pining after his own home. Moreover he told the Friar, that he felt uneasy at having received no answer, either from his mother or sister, to his last two letters. Padre Salvatore promised as soon as he should be in Genoa to go to Signora Teresa, and give her an account of her son, explaining also his anxiety on account of her long silence.

In fact two days after his return, he found time

to go to the house where Signora Teresa and her daughter lodged. He found their door locked, and no one within answered to his knocking. At last from a neighbour he learned that the widow, after having for some time struggled against declining health, had been taken so ill the preceeding week, that it had been necessary to carry her to the hospital, where she still was. Marietta, since her mother had thus left home, lodged and boarded with the dressmaker for whom she worked.

Shocked and grieved, the Capucin hastened to the hospital, and there indeed he beheld with sorrowful dismay Signora Teresa, evidently labouring under a fatal disease.

To the poor widow, after the first mortification of worldly pride, which called up a blush at being seen in such a place, the sight of her old friend was a great pleasure. The satisfactory account of her youngest son was the greatest comfort to her, but the tears started into her eyes when the Capucin hinted slightly that Giuseppe was uneasy at not hearing from her. After a silence, she said: "God's will be done! Poor Giuseppe

will soon hear the last news of his mother. I ought to thank heaven, and be grateful to our worthy kinsman, that the child is provided for."

She added that Andrea was stationed with his regiment in Savoy, and she could not hope to see him again on this side of the grave; but of his steadiness and consequent well and honourable doing she felt no doubt.

She left her peaceful blessing to this son, who had been her stay and comfort, with a tender benediction to her little Giuseppe.

It was for her daughter she felt most anxious, leaving her very unprotected, while her marriage might still be long delayed, and her betrothed was absent far over the sea.

The mantuamaker, with whom Marietta was at present, proposed recommending the young girl to a great lady, who was in search of some one to fill a capacity between that of lady's maid and companion. The situation would be very advantageous for the girl, and all her mother could wish, only the lady travelled a great deal, "and my poor child is very young to go into

foreign countries," said the widow, while a troubled look gathered in her sunken eyes.

The Friar bid her remember that Providence watched over every land; the most important point was the sort of person to whose protection Marietta would be confided.

Signora Teresa said her daughter came to see her twice a week, and would bring next time exact details on the subject.

The widow was much soothed by talking over her anxieties with the Friar; he left her with the promise of visiting her soon again, and in fact returned two days after.

The sick woman was much worse, and expressed herself so restlessly anxious to see her daughter, that Padre Salvatore readily went in quest of Marietta.

He called at the dressmaker's, but the young girl was no longer there, two days previous she had been presented to the lady already mentioned, who had taken a fancy to her at first sight, and kept her on trial at once.

Padre Salvatore asked the name and address of the lady, and started on receiving for answer:

"The Marchesa Andriani, who lives in her family palace."

Thither the monk hurried without hesitation, entered the splendid mansion, asked for Marietta, and was shewn through two or three halls full of lounging servants to an antechamber, in which sat the widow's daughter at work near a window.

A young officer was standing close by, leaning one hand on the back of her chair, and with the other twirling her scissars about on the table, while paying some playful compliments, to which the girl listened with a painfully embarrassed and bashful look.

On the approach of the Capucin the military man made way with a graceful bow, requesting the waiting woman to express to her lady his regret at having called too early, to be admitted to her presence.

Padre Salvatore in a few words told his errand to Marietta, who started up, saying she would just go into the inner apartment, to acquaint her mistress with the cause of her absence, and follow him immediately to her mother's bed side. Indeed she set out so quickly and walked at such a rapid

pace, that she arrived at the hospital almost as soon as the monk.

After a little conversation had passed between mother and daughter, the former asking eagerly many questions respecting the girl's new situation, Padre Salvatore said gravely:

"Marietta, I must tell you that you ought not to remain there; it is not a house fit for you." And he succinctly gave the two women a sketch of the Marchesa's character, and the dangers a young girl must run in such a household.

Marietta was much shocked, and her mother still more so, when they heard what the Friar had to say, and the widow insisted that her daughter should at once quit the service of that lady. The young girl promised to do so; she was only on trial for a week and would give her patroness warning immediately, to look out for some one else. A motive in no way offensive to the Marchioness could be alleged for leaving her; the aversion felt by the widow to authorize her daughter's travelling into foreign countries. Marietta, it was agreed, would return to her work at the mantuamaker's, till a proper service could be found.

"It was a pity," observed Marietta, "that the lady was not really good, for she was very pleasant and condescending." She had asked the young girl many questions about herself, and taken quite an interest in the story of her engagement with Alessandro; pitied her for his frequent absences at sea; thought a long engagement sad and imprudent. Marietta, she had observed, might have had better opportunities, but she added, "Love and constancy above all things!" The Marchesa even talked of giving her protégée a marriage portion.

But all this no whit modified the judgment of the Capucin, or of the widow, and it was irrevocably settled that Marietta should give in her resignation on returning to the palace.

This matter being determined, Signora Teresa became composed, declared she had not felt so comfortable for many a day, expressed the consolation she felt in recommending her children, and especially Marietta, to the watchful direction of Padre Salvatore.

In the relieved state of her spirits, she even ventured to ask him whether it might not be

possible, that her little Giuseppe should be allowed to come to Genoa and see her once more. The Friar willingly agreed to exert himself for the gratification of this wish. The invalid quite cheered, continued in pleasant conversation with Padre Salvatore and her daughter, who did not retire till she assured them that she felt disposed to a calm sleep.

In the course of the following night she breathed her last.

It was the Capucin's painful task to write to Andrea the news of his mother's death; he added also, in accordance with a wish she had expressed, a request to her son that he would write to his sister, confirming her resolution to quit the service of the Marchesa Geraldina.

Andrea did immediately write to Marietta, urging the point not only in memory of their mother, and in his own name, but also in that of Alessandro, who, as she knew, was to return shortly from a voyage.

The Friar himself delivered this letter. Marietta had given warning to the Marchesa, but could not refuse, she said, to remain a few days,

till the person proposed to succeed her, should be sure to come.

Padre Salvatore cautioned her against the risks of delay, and retired.

The young girl lingered and lingered on at the *Palazzo*, and finally set off to Paris with the Marchesa.

The monk was deeply grieved, but he had done all that lay in his power in this affair, nothing more remained for him to attempt, so he turned his mind to other subjects in which to employ himself usefully.

Nearly a twelvemonth elapsed, and Padre Salvatore was already thinking with satisfaction that the time was approaching, when he should keep his engagement with the country population, among whom he had preached during the preceeding Lent; already he pictured the cordial welcome he was to meet from those kind-hearted people, and the various little improvements he was sure of establishing.

It was therefore to him a disappointment as well as a surprise, when he found himself named to preach that season in a large town; that it

was the one in which his friend Don Camillo lived, was the only circumstance at all gratifying to him in the matter.

His astonishment was still greater to be summoned by the Superior, who was graciously pleased to restore to him the books once confiscated. At the same time Padre Salvatore received an injunction to prepare himself assiduously, so as to shew his full powers in the pulpit on this occasion, for the glory of God and the honour of his order. "You must not have to say," observed the worthy father Superior, "*abscondi talentum tuum in terra.*"

The secret of this sudden conversion to the fitness of literary study for a Capucin was simply this. The Superior had heard that Padre Ciro's eloquence, when he supplanted Salvatore to preach in presence of the Bishop, had not obtained very flattering success; while a certain Franciscan monk, hired by Don Camillo, disappointed of his friend, excited enthusiastic admiration through the town.

The triumph of one of the rival order was gall

and wormwood to the Superior of the Capucins; he well knew that the one of his monks whom he disliked the most, really possessed more talent in the pulpit than the rest, and so anxious was he that the Capucin preacher should this season eclipse the effect produced by the Franciscan the year before, that overcoming his antipathy for Padre Salvatore, he made choice of him to deliver the set of Lent sermons at Chiavari, and determined to give him, as we have seen, every facility and every encouragement to shew himself to advantage.

The very sight of his books revived the Friar's spirits, and as he plunged into them, he felt as if endowed with fresh vigour and elevation; animated moreover by the society of his friend during forty days, his eloquence did become splendid, and he did electrify crowded congregations.

On the last Sunday, as he left the church, he felt his hand gently seized and kissed; the next moment he recognised Andrea, who had been among his numerous hearers that day.

The meeting was a gratification to both, but

when the Friar asked news of Marietta, the young soldier's brow clouded, and his eyes flashed as he said that he disowned her for a sister.

He then went on to state, that shortly after her departure from Genoa, Alessandro returned from his voyage. Great was his dismay on finding his intended gone, and placed under the auspices of one, whose well known character must tarnish the reputation of any young girl, who should reside with her. He instantly wrote, peremptorily requiring her return, and proposing immediate marriage. It was true that he must make another voyage, the last he fondly hoped, but during this absence his young wife should be placed under the protection of a respectable family, friends of his. He frankly owned that a refusal, or even hesitation on her part to accept this plan, would be looked upon by him as a decided rupture.

She answered that the situation of a lonely bride, which he proposed, did not offer great temptations. She considered that it would be far wiser, she thought, to wait till Alessandro was at leisure to stay at home with his wife, and no where could

the intervening time pass less disagreeably, than with a kind and generous patroness.

Alessandro at once wrote back completely breaking off his engagement.

Both the young man's letters passed through Andrea's hands and had his full concurrence.

Alessandro then started speedily on, what in fact had been his last voyage, he was once more returned, and now on the point of marriage with another girl.

The Friar, though he concurred in the young soldier's regret and disapprobation, endeavoured to soften his resentment towards his misguided sister.

Andrea's account of himself was more satisfactory; he was already raised to the rank of corporal, and hoped soon to be sergeant; moreover he had begun to earn something beside his pay by occasionally exercising his art as engraver. His regiment had just been sent in garrison to Chiavari, where he had found the unexpected happiness of meeting his reverend friend.

CHAPTER X.

When Padre Salvatore returned to Genoa, he was received for the first time in his life by the Superior, with smiles and pompous eulogy, which gave little pleasure to the Friar, but on the other hand brought him much envy and aversion on the part of, at least, three of his brethren.

From this time Padre Salvatore became the show preacher of the convent. He was sent from town to town, from church to church, to deliver discourses on all principal feasts and saints' days.

In vain he begged of the Superior to allow him, if only a short season, among the country population, for whom he felt he could do more real good than in preaching striking sermons to the well instructed inhabitants of large cities.

The Superior told him blandly that he carried

modesty too far, adding: *Nemo autem lucernam accendens operit cum vase, aut subtus lectum ponit*, and that Padre Salvatore must indeed go to such or such a town, where he was impatiently expected.

Salvatore obeyed, but his heart was with his little flock among the hills. More than once he renewed his request for permission to visit it, this, however, was always indefinitely postponed.

His life ran on in this busy track for more than eighteen months, when at last, the fatigue of continual preaching, with journeying in various directions through heat, cold, or wet, brought on a temporary indisposition, which absolutely required some rest.

It may well be supposed that this opportunity was not lost by his rivals. Padre Ignazio took good care to push on his protégés, so that by the time Salvatore was out of the infirmary, Padre Ciro was gone on a mission, which was to occupy at least a fortnight, and Padre Paolo was named to preach on the fast of St. John the Evangelist in one of the principal churches of a neighbouring town. The first named reverend father was

in especial favour with the Superior, for one of his discourses had lately so captivated a noble lady, no other than the Marchesa Geraldina Andriani, that she had chosen him for her confessor, in place of a Franciscan his predecessor in that office.

Padre Salvatore, now convalescent, was one day presiding over the distribution of soup, habitually made to mendicants at the door of the convent, when his eye was attracted by one of the group of poor, a young girl whose wan countenance, and wasted though still graceful figure was wrapt in clothes, wretched indeed, yet bearing even in misery a certain appearance of neatness. It seemed as if that the countenance was familiar to him, and yet he could not tell where he had seen it.

When the poor creature had received her portion, she went a few paces off and sat down, as if exhausted, or waiting for some one, or both. Once or twice the monk thought she cast a look towards him. To clear his ideas with respect to this person, he went up to her, when blushing deeply she said :

"Oh! Padre, do you not know me?" and burst into tears. He then instantly recognised Marietta, Signora Teresa's daughter.

But how came Marietta to be in such utter destitution. Was she not with the Marchesa Geraldina?

These were the first questions which suggested themselves to the reverend father, but it was long before the agitated girl recovered composure sufficient to give the following account of herself.

She had continued some time well pleased in the gay service of the Marchesa, and it was under the influence of the surrounding moral atmosphere, and indeed of direct advice from her mistress, that, thinking she could coquettishly sport with her faithful lover's feelings, and whistle him back at will, she had written as she did, without any intention of really breaking with him. When she received his answer, definitively giving up their engagement, pride kept her silent, and resentment blinded her to the full justification of his conduct, arising as it did, from the situation she had chosen for herself and obstinately refused to quit.

For some time she remained a gratified satellite, whirling in the fluttering orbit of her mistress. But gradually the health of the Marchesa began to decline, she consulted the most eminent physicians, tried every variety of medical system, visited the most renowned baths and watering places in Europe. All in vain. Heaven alone knows how much ill humour, caprice and petty tyranny, the humble companion and waiting-woman had to endure in the service of the invalid fine lady, whose smiles and graces still shone in public, though with fitful brilliancy. Marietta bore and forbore with good-humoured patience, and intelligent cheerfulness.

But at last there came a day, when the conviction burst upon the Marchesa, that her's was an incurable, fatal disease, which could leave her but a very few years, perhaps only months of life.

From that moment she became the prey of deep melancholy, and of religious terrors.

She returned from a foreign capital to her palace in Genoa; her doors were closed against all her former society, none but priests, monks, and old devout ladies were admitted. She esta-

blished her oratory in the back part of the dwelling, where the window, for sole view, looked out on the dead wall of a narrow lane, of which the blank surface had no other break of interest, save a plaster Madonna placed in a niche. Instead of dressing herself, she now adorned altars, she belonged to various pious confraternities. Her whole time was spent in prayer and edifying practices; she lavished immense sums in enriching shrines, and benefiting religious establishments.

In short she gave herself up to this turn of mind, with the same exaggeration and extravagance, with which she had formerly launched into the follies of the world.

Her attendant adapted herself as well as she could to this new disposition of her patroness, read to her sermons and meditations instead of romances, accompanied her during hours each day to church, and submitted to all the observances the Marchesa now loved to establish around her.

But Marietta, though ready and anxious to satisfy her mistress, still herself possessed health,

youth, beauty, spirits, and a comparatively pure conscience. So she was nothing loath to be now and then refreshed by the smiles or the cheerful talk of any old acquaintance she might meet in the street. At first she would ingenuously report to the Marchesa such conversations, which but a short time back would have amused her lady, who however now invariably replied with rebuke and bitterness. Consequently Marietta for the future kept such pleasant little diversions to herself, till one unlucky evening, when returning from executing a commission given to her by her mistress, through the by-street which ran along one side of the palace, she chanced to meet one, who had counted among the former admirers of the Signora Geraldina, and had more than once in those days flirted a little with the *soubrette*. They now again fell into playful chat.

"I swear to you, Padre," said Marietta vehemently, "there was not one word of harm said, we merely laughed at some innocent jokes." But the colloquy ended by the gentleman playfully sending a kiss upon the tips of his fingers after the girl.

The lamp which lighted the Madonna opposite the Marchesa's oratory, near which they stood, must have disclosed to the lady's eyes this little scene of coquetry, for as soon as the waiting-woman entered her mistress' presence, she was assailed by a torrent of virulent reproaches, which at last elicited a hasty reply, and the Marchesa gave Marietta warning on the spot.

Lighter storms of the kind had occurred before, and had passed away, but on this occasion the patroness was inexorable and the attendant was obliged to leave that house which she had so inauspiciously entered.

The girl tried to get a new service, but this was not easy. Many objected to the *ex-soubrette* of a lady, who had given so much scandal to the world, and this difficulty was clenched by the aggravating circumstance, that now the Marchesa had reformed, she had dismissed this young person.

Then Marietta took work from dressmakers and milliners; she laboured much, earned little, and by degrees having expended the small sum she had hoarded from her stipend, she began to sell her trinkets, then her clothes.

Anxiety, close application to work, and poor living brought on a serious fit of illness, and Marietta passed many weeks between life and death in the same hospital, in which her mother had died. At last she crawled forth weak and emaciated, incapable of work for months. By degrees the last remnant of her wardrobe was sold for food and lodging. She was now living with a poor woman, whose children she watched in the day, for which service she was allowed to sleep under their humble roof at night. But the mother of the children was too poor to add another mouth to those she had to provide for by her sole labour, so Marietta was fain to come to the Capucins for soup to keep soul and body together.

"I half wished, half feared to meet you," she added, looking into the monk's compassionate eyes, "but never saw you till to-day. I know," she went on rapidly, "all you must think of me. Not only you, but every body has a right to suppose all evil of me; but I am not so bad, as no doubt, people set me down to be. I say to you, reverend father, as if I spoke in the presence

of God, that I confess I have been careless of good advice, imprudent, vain, giddy, but beyond that, thank God, I have no graver sins to acknowledge. My mother's prayers alone can have borne me through the temptations that surrounded me, so little scathed as I have been."

The earnestness of sincerity was in her look, her voice, her action.

Padre Salvatore, after soothing words, began to consult with Marietta as to what could be done to get her out of so miserable a situation. Had she not applied to her brother for assistance? he asked.

She dared not, for she knew how much he resented her conduct.

Had she not attempted to obtain forgiveness from the Marchioness?

She had called at the palace and had been refused admittance. She had written several humble letters, they were returned unopened.

The Friar pondered over the matter in silence. If Padre Ciro had been in Genoa, he would have recommended Marietta to him, and bespoken his good offices towards a reconciliation between the girl and her mistress.

As it was, he considered whether it might not be right to overcome the repugnance he felt to approaching the presence of the Signora, and to plead himself a cause in which he took a lively interest.

While thinking over the matter thus, a vague wonder crossed his mind how the Marchesa could dispense the sums, Marietta mentioned as lavished on pious purposes. The Andriani family, as Padre Salvatore well knew, was ruined, and the discreditable sources of income formerly attributed to this lady, must now have ceased. At the first word of inquiry with respect to Signora Geraldina's fortune, Marietta exclaimed: "Do you not know then that Antonio Pontremolo died without a will, and all his property was inherited by the Marchesa, his next of kin, though only a distant relation on her mother's side, and he had never even seen her? You will allow, Padre, that it is hard that she should roll in wealth, while I am without a crust."

The monk asked whether the Marchesa was aware of what had been the state of things between her late kinsman and Signora Teresa.

The girl answered in the negative. She had never mentioned the subject; it might have displeased her mistress; and of what use could it be? If Antonio Pontremolo thought *he* owed her mother nothing, there was no chance of the Marchesa fancying *she* ought to do something for Marietta.

Padre Salvatore no longer hesitated.

He desired Marietta to prepare a penitential letter, expressing in proper terms her regret at having offended her lady; stating the destitute situation in which she was. and begging to be readmitted to the service of the Marchesa.

This letter the girl was to bring to him the next morning, and the Friar undertook to have it delivered to the lady.

Marietta took her leave with expressions of gratitude, feeling already revived by the kind sympathy of her old friend.

Having received the epistle in question next day, Padre Salvatore called up his courage for an interview, of which the anticipation was extremely painful to him, and set forth resolutely for the Palazzo Andriani.

He asked admittance simply as a father Capucin, who wished to say a few words to the Signora Marchesa. He was shewn into the same antechamber, where he had once found Marietta, and at the same window where she was then sitting, was now a sister of charity with a prayer book in her hand.

From an inner saloon the monk heard the lady's voice in reply to the message delivered by the servant, say in ready tones: "By all means. Shew the reverend father in immediately."

The footman ushered in the Friar, and retiring shut the door.

Padre Salvatore stood a moment motionless in the middle of the room as he cast his eyes upon the thin, almost transparent figure, languidly reclining upon a sopha. Slight trace remained of that rich majestic beauty, which had been hers, yet the lines of the head and of the whole person, still bore a cast of remarkable distinction.

Seeing that the Friar did not advance, the lady pointed courteously to a seat not far from her; her visitor advanced with a bow, and was no sooner seated than she pressed upon him some

slight refreshments which were on the table; he declined modestly, and then begged leave to explain the little business, which he hoped might excuse his intrusion.

The Friar no sooner mentioned Marietta than the Marchesa interrupted him with:—

"Oh! reverend father, I entreat you, name not that creature to me; she is quite unworthy of your interest, as of admittance into any properly regulated house."

"I should grieve," returned the monk composedly, "to protect one guilty of anything more serious than I supposed; will the Signora Marchesa condescend to enlighten me with repect to this young person, by explaining wherein she has been faulty?"

The lady then began, with considerable bitterness, a philippic against the poor girl, to which the Friar listened attentively, without offering any interruption, to the end. From all he heard he derived a clear conviction, that Marietta had truly told him the "head and front of her offending."

So when the Marchesa had run herself out, and lay back on her cushion exhausted, the reverend

man began meekly to talk of charity, of indulgence to youth and levity, adding: "I think, Signora, that if you knew how truly penitent the poor child is, and how deplorable the situation into which she has fallen, your kind heart would take compassion on her. Let this letter speak for her better than I can," and he put the paper into the lady's hand.

"Since you ask it," returned the Marchesa, "I will read what the girl writes. I assure you, father, it is more than I would have done for any one else."

The monk thanked the Marchesa, and then left her in silence to the perusal of the epistle.

Poor Marietta's words did seem somewhat to move the reader. She went over the letter twice, then in a low, softened voice said: "Poor thing!" and after a moment's pause, she added: "Padre, I pray you, tell her she has my christian forgiveness. I cannot take her back into my service, the person you saw in my antechamber is far better suited to one in my situation."—Here the lady felt for her purse, and handed two Napoleons to the Friar—"but give her this to help her till

she gets a decent place—and if some further—little assistance is wanted later—you will perhaps have the goodness to let me know."

The Capucin looked down at the two pieces of gold which he held between his fingers, and after pondering awhile, raised his head, saying:

"Signora Marchesa, you will no doubt be surprised, that instead of thanking you for this gift (though truly I do so for the feeling which prompts it) I should have the boldness to ask you for much more in favour of this poor girl."

The lady looked inquiringly in his face.

"Permit me to ask you," continued the Capucin, "whether you ever heard the story of Marietta's mother?"

"No," answered the Marchesa, "the girl did not often talk of her family; when first she came to me, she said something about having a sweetheart, and that she was to be married some day, but all that vanished in smoke, as such things do you know," and then came a hollow giggle, like the ghost of a former laugh.

"In short," went on the lady becoming serious again at once, "it was a blameable imprudence

in me to take a girl into my confidential service, of whom I knew so little, just upon the recommendation of a dressmaker."

"If you will grant me permission," replied the monk, "I will give you some details respecting Marietta and her family, which will explain my impression that Providence has marked this poor girl as a special object for your generous protection."

Signora Geraldina bowed assent and Padre Salvatore began.

"Marietta's mother, Signora Teresa, was born and bred to competence, but an unfaithful guardian robbed her of almost the whole of her property, married her unworthily to a man in narrow circumstances, while he himself carried off to a distant country the fraudulently obtained capital, and entered upon speculations, by which he realised large wealth. He returned to Genoa. Signora Teresa, then a widow and mother of an honest family sinking into poverty, applied to him for a slight compensation of the wrong done her. The man did not deny the truth of the claim, which however he refused to satisfy, and using all

the power which riches give, staved off the widow's endeavour to obtain redress. He never made any restitution during his life, and at last sudden death put it for ever out of his power."

Here Signora Geraldina crossed herself.

"He died intestate," continued the monk, "and his ill gotten riches went to a distant relation. In the mean time poor Signora Teresa sunk deeper into unmerited distress; her son was taken by the conscription, and she at length died in a hospital. Marietta in her destitution went into service in a house perilous for a young and pretty girl, whose only treasure was her good name, but in spite of my warning voice, of her brother's admonition, for she had a brother, an honourable young man, she persisted in braving the danger."

"I always thought," interrupted the lady eagerly, "that something was wrong with Marietta before she came to me."

The Friar went on without seeming to notice this remark.

"Before Marietta entered that house, her name was pure as the morning dew-drop in the

violet. She was promised to an honest man, whom she loved and who loved her. He went to a distant land to earn wherewithal to settle in the world with a young wife. When he heard with whom his betrothed had placed herself, he offered immediate marriage at any worldly risk, and insisted that she should at once leave the situation in which she was, or break with him for ever. Marietta, partly influenced by her mistress, remained with her, renouncing at the same time an honourable marriage, and an indignant brother's love and protection. Nothing now remained to the girl but her patroness."

As the Marchesa listened, the shifting colour in her cheek began to betray consciousness.

The Capucin went on:

"It was a gay and pleasant service; mistress and maid disported along flowery paths, unmindful that many a snare laid concealed, and that the finger of the world pointed at them, not in praise or honour. At last the lady saw her errors and turned from them; then the silly child, who had hovered near her like a butterfly, was driven away and lay writhing on the ground, like a moth which has been singed."

"Oh! noble lady, your kinsman, Antonio Pontremolo, was the unfaithful guardian of Teresa; you are the heiress of his misgotten wealth. And the Marchesa Geraldina Andriani's was the service fatal to the good name of a poor girl, who had but her unblemished maiden character to depend upon. To be dismissed now from the house of her high born patroness, just when that lady has turned from late follies and weaknesses to edify the world by her piety, renders the stain on Marietta still deeper, and shuts her from other honourable houses."

"This is strong language, reverend father," said the lady flushing, after a short pause.

"I would fain not give offence, oh! Signora," answered the Capucin gently, "but it is the duty of one who wears my habit, humbly to present the truth to the rich, and firmly give protection to the poor."

The lady bowed her head reverently. "What would you have me do, Padre?" she inquired meekly.

"If you consider all I have told you, no doubt you will think with me, that it would be well

that you should secure to Marietta a small part of what was robbed from her mother by your relative, so as to make an humble provision for life, which will place her out of the reach of the sufferings and temptations, to which youth and beauty are exposed in destitution."

The Marchesa reflected a moment, and then said: "Padre, I will willingly give Marietta a portion wherewith to enter any convent, in which she may choose to take the veil. That, you know will be a pious work."

A shiver ran through Padre Salvatore's frame, at the thought of compulsory cloisteral life, and he answered:

"Oh! Marchesa, a forced or purchased vocation can never be acceptable in the sight of God."

"What then shall I do? for you point to a large sum for the girl."

"Very trifling," replied the Friar, "compared to the immense unrighteous property of which you are heiress and possessor."

"You mistake me, reverend father, it is not worldly avarice that makes me hesitate. I pray you, understand, that the greatest part of my

fortune during my life, and the whole after my death, I destine to pious purposes. Now to make the provision you speak of for Marietta, is turning away a considerable sum to the use of a mere sinful worldly creature."

"Surely you ought to have no scruple in giving a very small portion in atonement for the sin of a relative, which in itself is a really good work, leaving the far greater part of your large wealth to the religious destinations you mention."

"Ah, reverend father!" exclaimed the Marchesa, fixing upon him a troubled look, "if I had double what I possess, it would not suffice to make atonement for my own offences. You do not know. Oh! you do not know," and she pressed her clasped hands together in agony, "what a sinner I have been."

"I am better acquainted than you suppose with your private history," said the Friar in a low voice. "Oh! Geraldina, wife of Filippo Vanni, I am your husband's brother!"

The invalid uttered a faint shriek, and would have flung herself at the feet of the monk, but he prevented her and replaced her on her couch.

"Oh! Padre Salvatore, command and I will obey, but have mercy, do not, oh! do not fling his and your malediction on my head, already bent to the earth." And she raised both her arms, as if to ward off what she feared.

Salvatore soothed her with words of peace, and after a time she recovered some composure.

Then came a silence, which she broke by a whispered inquiry, to which he answered, shaking his head: "He reached America, but more I never heard of him. Heaven alone knows whether he still wanders on the face of the earth, haunted by the thought of blood shed in a moment of frenzy, or whether, having made peace with God, he has passed to a purer world. Poor fellow! he has stood too much in need of mercy himself to be relentless towards another. He had a good heart and I am sure if he were beside you now, as I am, his feeling would be: 'Geraldina, let there be peace between us, you have my free forgiveness.' Receive these words of reconciliation, my sister, as from himself, I know I can speak them for him."

"Generous! noble!" exclaimed the Marchesa

in a broken voice, large tears standing in her eyes. "Surely heaven has accepted my repentance since this consolation is sent to me; it is more than I had ever hoped."

"Poor frail creatures that we are," returned the monk, "we should never forget the words of our Lord: '*In qua mensura mensi fueritis remetietur vobis.*' With what measure ye mete shall it be measured to you again.

Fearing that the invalid had been too much agitated, the Friar proposed to retire, and with permission return another time, but Signora Geraldina would not allow this till something had been settled about Marietta. "This at least," said she, "is not one of my inexpiable errors."

"No error is inexpiable," observed the Padre, "its consequences may be irretrievable, but true repentance washes away the stain from the soul, and disposes us to the best atonement for irremediable wrong, by seeking to do away as far as lies in our power, with those we can cancel. Your eagerness to benefit Marietta is kind and good."

The Marchesa now declared her intention of

making, during her life, a monthly allowance to Marietta, and of leaving to her by will a considerable sum. Here the Capucin had to moderate to more modest proportions the proposed liberality of the Marchesa.

He should fix the sum himself, she said, but she could not rest till the thing was done. She would immediately send her servant to appoint her notary for the next day at an hour she named, and entreated Padre Salvatore to meet him at her house, for she could not feel satisfied if the arrangements for Marietta were not sanctioned by his presence and concurrence. At length the Capucin took leave: "My heart is full of gratitude," said the Marchesa as he retired.

"And I will say as much," returned the Friar.

A few hours later the afternoon service was over in the church of the Capucins. The Superior and Padre Ignazio were side by side walking leisurely up and down in front of the convent, enjoying the evening breeze, when a servant clad in the Andriani livery came in sight and asked for Padre Salvatore.

"You must make a mistake," observed the

Superior, "you mean Padre Ciro no doubt, but he is not within, he is on a mission; is there any thing for your lady's service which another of our house can do?"

"It is Padre Salvatore I mean," persisted the man, "it is to him I am to give this letter; the name is plain enough."

The Superior took the letter and glanced at the superscription, there could remain no doubt to whom it was directed, then he turned up the other side, it bore the Andriani crest.

Padre Ignazio fell into a little sociable chat with the messenger, whom he knew, and in a few minutes the good innocent servant, without the least consciousness of committing any indiscretion, gave some information of considerable value for a far sighted man. He learned that Padre Salvatore had been at the Palace Andriani that morning, and the household supposed it was owing to the intercession of that good man, that the Marchesa had determined to take back poor Marietta Bertaldi, whom she had sent away six months ago. For the Padre was hardly gone, when the lady called the sister of charity, and

then gave orders to have Marietta's room got ready. In the course of the colloquy it happened to drop out also, that the worthy serving man was rather hot and tired, having had to go with a letter for the Marchesa's notary at the other end of the town, before being sent off here.

"Gentlefolks," added the man, "sometimes forget that we use not horses legs, but our own."

All of a sudden Padre Ignazio exclaimed: "But, Pedrino, we must not detain you in this idle talk. Go into the convent, take the first staircase to the left, follow the corridor, and the last door but one on the right, is that of Padre Salvatore. I think you will find him there."

The Superior returned the letter into the hands of the man, who went off to follow the directions given him, and the two monks began once more to pace up and down with the same leisurely step, their conversation seeming only a little more earnest than before, though carried on in a lower tone.

In the mean time Padre Salvatore was sitting in his cell at the open window, which looked into the convent garden.

He was thinking over what so very rarely

occurred in his existence, a day of strong emotions, when he was startled by a tap at his door, and the entrance of a liveried servant, who presented to him a letter. It was from Signora Geraldina to let him know that the notary had fixed an hour much earlier than that she had named, and begged to know if this could suit the convenience of the Capucin. If not the Marchesa would settle any other day and hour he might prefer. She also asked as a favour of Padre Salvatore to come half-an-hour before hand, and to bring Marietta. "I long," continued the writer to embrace her and exchange forgiveness with her in your presence. The good sister who is here makes no objection to sharing the service with her; and after all no one ever waited on me so pleasantly as poor Marietta."

"Padre Salvatore, you are an angel of peace. For years my spirit has not known the calm which has settled on my heart, since you healed it with your gentle words."

"GERALDINA."

The monk sent answer that he would obey the Signora Marchesa's commands, the next morning.

CHAPTER XI.

SHORTLY after the refectory bell rang for supper.

When the meal was over, as the monks left the hall, the Superior approached Padre Salvatore with a gracious mien, and expressed much satisfaction at seeing him so well recovered in health.

The Friar was much obliged for the kind interest expressed.

"You seem quite restored."

"Pretty nearly indeed."

"I think," said the Superior, "you are now equal to preaching again."

"Very soon I dare say I shall."

"Come, come," returned the other cheerily, "you look too well to fancy yourself still on the

sick list. What you want is a little change to set you quite up. I have the very thing for you. You shall go to-morrow and preach at Chiavari."

A slight smile lurked in the corner of the Superior's mouth as he said these words, which made Salvatore shiver.

He answered however composedly, that Padre Paolo was appointed for that place next day.

The Superior replied that this arrangement had been made in the supposition, that Padre Salvatore was still incapable of doing the duty, for which however he was, if physical strength allowed, far more competent than his brother monk.

The Friar disclaimed the compliment, the Superior insisted on being the best judge, and then added: "Yes, yes, you shall preach at Chiavari to-morrow, and thence you shall go on to the little flock among the hills you have so often asked to visit again; the mountain breezes will do you good. You shall have a fortnight's leave of absence."

The Friar begged as a favour, that the matter might stand as already settled for Padre Paolo at

Chiavari, and that the gracious offer of the holiday might be delayed.

"Why?" asked the Superior fixing his keen eyes upon him.

Salvatore felt that he had none but a desperate game left to play.

"Because," he answered calmly, "the Marchesa Andriani has written a request to see me to-morrow."

The same cold smile played on the Superior's lips as he answered: "Indeed! but you are not her confessor."

"No, I called upon her yesterday, having been requested to speak a word in favour of a poor person who had offended the Marchesa."

"The Marchesa Andriani is a most noble and pious lady, and I take it as an honour to our house that one of the community can pleasure her in any way. But Padre Paolo shall wait upon her in your stead."

"Reverend father, you are perhaps not aware, that the Marchesa is my brother's wife. She tells me that I, who represent in her mind her absent husband, can give her more consolation

than any one else. In the sad state of health in which she is, I have a peculiar interest in her who is my sister-in-law."

"His community is the family of a monk," replied the Superior gravely. "Besides, on your return you can renew your visits to the Marchesa whenever she may wish."

"Her state is very precarious, father, her days are numbered, and few," said the Friar almost imploringly.

"Life and death are in the hand of God," returned the Superior.

"The Marchesa," urged Padre Salvatore, "wishes me to bring her one to whom she grants forgiveness. I have long known the poor girl, for whom my pleading has obtained the favour, therefore the Signora Geraldina looks upon me as best fitted to complete the reconciliation, and the Marchesa has very justly promised to make a small provision for this young person, but it will be well that I see her generosity should not exceed reasonable bounds."

"Explain the matter, and give the name and address of your protegée to Padre Paolo, who

will make your excuses to the Marchesa. He is a good and conscientious man, he will fulfil your errand of charity, and his exhortations will edify the lady, you may rely on this, and set your mind at rest. A Capucin is ever ready at the call of duty. You must go to Chiavari to-morrow, and I insist upon your spending a fortnight among the hills. It is a refreshment of mind and body, you have long wished and wanted. Go my son. A good night's rest to you. Remember you have to be on your road by six in the morning."

And the Superior walked majestically away.

Padre Salvatore hurrying to his cell, hid his face in his hands, while tears of rage and disappointment fell from his eyes.

Presently however he roused himself, and to avoid neglecting any thing, went in quest of Padre Paolo, whom he found in no gracious mood, he having just received intimation that he was supplanted in the expected honours of the next day, by the rival who now entered his room. At first Padre Paolo would not admit the sincerity of his brother monk's regret at the circumstance, but at

last he became impressed by the tone of heart-felt vexation, which involuntarily shewed itself in Salvatore's expression, and which appeared explained to the mind of his interlocutor, when it was made clear that, to go to Chiavari, Padre Salvatore had to give up an appointed visit to the Marchesa Geraldina, and that he (Padre Paolo) was selected in his stead.

Padre Salvatore then went on to mention Marietta, and explain all the details of the situation, not forgetting to give the girl's direction in writing.

Padre Paolo listened, with occasional interjections and inarticulate sounds of compassion or assent, and ended by saying: "Well, be satisfied that I will manage all things right."

In spite of this assurance, father Salvatore felt that the cause was lost, and with this conviction he went to bed with a heavy heart, which was no lighter when he set out next morning. The same weight laid there during all his sojourn among the hills, in spite of the affectionate reception he met with from the inhabitants.

The good seed he had sown there, he found

nearly choked by weeds from want of frequent judicious culture. He laboured to clear away the impediments, and to carry on the little flock a step or two. But in the midst of all, the thought of Marietta and of Signora Geraldina would intervene.

The Marchesa expired the day before the Capucin returned to Genoa; he arrived just in time to take his place in the funeral procession, headed by deputations from the Capucins, Domenicans, Franciscans, Camaldoli, Crociferi, etcetera, followed by confraternities of all colours.

As soon as the grave had closed over the remains of Geraldina, all dispersed, and Padre Salvatore went in quest of Marietta. He found her weeping sincere tears for her patroness of whose death she had just heard.

Upon inquiry, the Friar found that his misgivings had not been incorrect. The girl had never been summoned to the Marchesa's presence, nor received any message from her.

The kind words of reconciliation, which Padre Salvatore reported, were received with real disinterested gratitude. The monk silently rejoiced

that she had not been lured as he had been, by brighter hopes, of which he abstained from any hint. Two days after, the will of the Marchesa was opened. No mention was therein made of Marietta, but, besides various pious bequests, directions were left that a thousand masses should be said, for the soul of the testatrix, by the Capucin convent at twenty francs each mass.

What was now to be done for Marietta? The monk thought of getting her placed as a pupil in the convent of the Fieschine, an immense establishment, where an order of nuns receive, lodge, clothe, and board a large number of young women, whom they instruct in various works, especially that of the finest embroidery. The produce of their labour goes to the support of the institution. These boarders are free to leave, if they please, and occasionally are placed out upon the recommendation of the nuns. Others end by taking the habit.

When Padre Salvatore had ascertained from Marietta, that she would willingly enter at the Fieschine, he turned over in his mind to whom he could apply for the necessary recommendation.

He could only think of the Rector of the Parish and of his own Superior; he knew the latter well enough to be aware, that if there was a chance of obtaining anything in that quarter, it was by applying to him first.

So to serve Marietta, Salvatore did what he would not have done to save his own life. He asked a favour of his Superior, dwelling upon the destitute situation of the poor girl, the Marchesa Andriani, in her last moments, having forgotten to carry into execution the kind intentions she had towards her.

The answer to this representation was, that the Superior would consider of the matter, adding that if he could grant the request, he could also depend upon the Rector to back his recommendation, and therefore desired Padre Salvatore not to take the useless step of applying himself.

Three days afterwards the Friar was told that a protegée of father Ignazio and of one of his penitents, the Countess C——, had been preferred to Marietta.

One thing alone now remained to be done, and Padre Salvatore did it without saying anything to

the girl, lest here again should be a disappointment.

He wrote to Andrea, explaining the pitiable situation of his sister, and pressing upon him the duty of coming to her relief and protection. The letter was written from the heart and was answered from the heart, and Padre Salvatore had the joy of carrying a letter of peace and reconciliation from the brother to the sister.

Andrea sent from the little savings he had been able to make, wherewithal to relieve the poor girl's most pressing necessities, and as he continued to earn tolerably well by his engraving, he furnished Marietta what, with the produce of her own work, enable her to live decently and honestly.

Dear bought experience had made her wise, and few, even of those who had never erred, could be said to lead a more cheerfully laborious, prudent, and irreproachable life, as that by which the poor girl won Padre Salvatore's fatherly approbation, and regained her brother's love and confidence.

At the end of his five years' military service

Andrea left the army with the grade of sergeant, and possessed of the good will and strong esteem both of his comrades and superior officers.

His first visit was to Padre Salvatore, to whom he poured out all the feelings of a grateful heart; and to the Friar the now unclouded affection and good understanding between these worthy young people, and his occasional intercourse with them, was a source of great satisfaction.

More than a month had elapsed, when Andrea came one day to consult Padre Salvatore on a project, that had been growing in his mind, which he had already broken to his sister, and from which she was not averse; but neither of them would take a determination without their reverend friend's approbation and advice.

The young man then went on to say, that his idea was to emigrate with Marietta to Buenos Ayres, where he was assured that both his sister and himself could get plenty of well paid for work, each in their respective calling. It might be a weakness, but he confessed the feeling; he did not like remaining in Genoa where so many had known her in the service of the Marchesa, and

had heard her story more or less correctly. She herself owned she should be glad to get away. "If," continued Andrea, "we had but a moderate sum wherewith to buy a bit of land, which we could live by, even cultivating it with our own hands, we would gladly settle quietly here in the country; but you know we have no means for this."

Padre Salvatore's mind glanced back at the hope, he had once entertained for a moment from Signora Geraldina, and he sighed, but said nothing; he had never alluded either with the sister or the brother to a circumstance, the mention of which could only cause vain regret.

Andrea went on to say, that, situated as he and Marietta were, they must depend, he upon his engraving, she upon her dressmaking and millinery; now these occupations could only be carried on in a town. Genoa, both wished to quit, and all the other large towns in the kingdom were equally garrisons, where Marietta could at any time meet some officer, who had known and still remembered the Marchesa Geraldina and her pretty attendant. Andrea frankly owned that he

shrank from this, perhaps to a morbid degree. Was it not better for both to go and live in peace without the fear of shame?

Padre Salvatore thought awhile. He saw that if the brother and sister remained, Andrea's sensitive feeling would cast a cloud over their existence, and might even embroil him in unfortunate quarrels. In America nothing of the kind would disturb their serenity, and even the idea crossed the mind of the Friar, that there Marietta might have a fair chance of an honourable marriage.

Once more the good Padre sighed, and then said the project was good.

The only question which now remained, was as to the means of putting the plan into practice. Andrea had a very small store, but he thought himself sure of getting work enough in Genoa, speedily to earn that which, added to this little sum, might furnish nearly enough for his and Marietta's passage out, and wherewithal to live till they could get occupation in the new country.

This expectation proved correct, and the Capucin also got up a subscription for Marietta among

the most generous of his penitents. The necessary funds were thus obtained in a short time, and all arrangements made; the passage was taken, and the day of sailing came.

Padre Salvatore accompanied his friends on board, and lingered till it was necessary to leave the vessel; it was a sad moment when the last farewell was spoken. "God bless you, my children," said the Capucin, "my prayers shall follow you. Let me have news of you soon."

Who can say with how heavy a heart the Friar, from the boat which was rowing him back to shore, looked at those two young faces hanging over the side of the ship, and the hands waving a last adieu.

Sooner than was expected, and worse than any had feared, came news of the emigrants. The vessel, caught in a violent storm off the coast of Spain, had been wrecked, and every soul on board perished.

The sad fate of the friends, in whom he had so long taken a deep well placed interest, fell like a thunderbolt on the Friar, and after the first shock he sunk gradually into profound melancholy.

As he retraced, link by link, the chain of events which had thus ended in the untimely death of these luckless young people, he felt with a burning pang, how at every step of his own endeavours to work out justice or to obtain alleviation for this much wronged family, he had been wilfully and systematically thwarted, baffled, and defeated.

These meditations led to despairing thoughts: What was he, would he ask himself, to nurse aspirations of seeking out the oppressed, of righting the injured, or of soothing suffering? He, who was bound by a vow of implicit obedience; he the passive instrument of the will, the caprice, the passions of another man? What business had he to raise his thoughts to God, or feel, think, judge, or strive for his fellow creatures? He, who in comparison with all free human beings, was as the palsied limb of a cripple, to the effective member of one in health? No further illusion. He was a Friar, not a man: it was time to look his fate in the face and resign himself. He must live and die a mere machine, the sport of an external will; he must move and have his being as a senseless automaton, unless now

and then life within might stir and tangle among the excitement and irritation of petty conventual intrigues and passions.

Under these impressions which each passing day served only to strengthen, Padre Salvatore fell into a state of torpor; his once animated discourses, became "flat, dull, and unprofitable;" he neither could nor cared to preach; he went through his daily avocations with leaden indifference; the spirit within him seemed spent, and his life was fast becoming a mere mechanical routine, when his soul suddenly thrilled anew under the influence which burst upon Piedmont in 1847 and 1848.

How willingly would he, young and robust, have shed his blood for his country; but that might not be, he could only pray for her, and that he did most fervently.

On this point again the sympathies of the greater number of his brethren were opposed to his. The clergy, both regular and secular, were for the most part inimical to the cause of Italy and of freedom.

Every one knows how the war of 1848 and

1849 ended. The Austrians still remained master of Lombardy, but the loyal-hearted young king, Victor Emmanuel, maintained in Piedmont the liberties granted by his father.

Constitutional institutions took root and bore fruit. Old abuses gave way before gradual reforms. Among these came the law which did away with separate courts of justice for clergy and laity, establishing one equal legal jurisdiction for all the citizens of the same state.

On this subject also Padre Salvatore differed from most of his brethren. And not less so from very many among them, when the two laws to which we have already alluded, for the civil administration of ecclesiastical property, and the suppression of many convents, were presented to the legislature.

These questions were canvassed passionately throughout the country.

On the latter point petitions for and against were got up on all sides by laity and clergy, indiscriminately.

Padre Salvatore's heart leaped within him, when he heard that there was a chance, not only for

him, but for so many others, who he well knew suffered as much as he, of passing from conventual slavery to the comparative freedom of the secular clergy.

Two of his companions within the walls of his own convent, and several belonging to other communities, shared his views, and when alone with him, or among each other, expressed themselves vehemently on the subject.

One of his fellow Capucins came one day to his cell, and related that a petition had just been signed exclusively by laymen, for maintaining the monasteries on the old footing: "I wish," continued the narrator indignantly, "that those who set their names to such a document, could be themselves kept in a convent, that they might know a little what they are talking about, and what many of us have to suffer."

The Superior of the Capucins did not fail to indite a petition to the legislature against the proposed law, inviting his monks to sign; nor were various and cogent admonitions wanting to extort, an occasionally unwilling name. All signed, including the man, who had but a week

before made the above reported observation on the address of the lay supporters of monastic institutions. All signed except Padre Salvatore, who quietly but steadily refused to give his sanction to a document, which went against his conscientious conviction.

He remained a marked man in the Community; his own estimation of those among the subscribers who had signed (to his knowledge, in spite of their own real opinion) fell. "I had held some of them," said the monk to me, "as friends, henceforth they were reduced to acquaintances;" and they felt ill at ease in the presence of a man, whose courage was a tacit reproach to their weakness. They were among those who grieved but little, when the Superior, shortly after, vented his resentment of Padre Salvatore's opposition to his wishes, by sending him from the house in Genoa to that of Monforte, where I found him a few months after his arrival.

"Here," continued the Friar, "the society of poor Petronio, whom I had formerly known in Genoa, was to me a source of great comfort and pleasure; him I have now lost. The rest you know."

"Why," asked I quickly, "should you not avail yourself of the facility, the new law gives you of quitting for ever your convent."

He answered me thus: "When the bill was discussed in the Senate, after having passed the chamber of deputies, an amendment was proposed and carried, by which though it remained optional to the members of the suppressed orders to leave conventual life, none but the monk or nun remaining in a cloister could receive the pension awarded upon the ecclesiastical fund. To those who leave the monastery without joining another community, is returned the value of the portion they brought with them, and they have no right to any pension. Consequently only those can quit the convent and become as of the secular clergy, who brought a good sum, or whose families are able and willing to support them, or again who can find proper means of maintaining themselves. Now, not one of these three cases is mine. The land I brought to the convent was lost by a law suit. I have no family to assist me, nor any opportunity of getting a suitable employment.

"Had I remained in Genoa, the thing might

have been different in this last respect; by dint of exertion I might have found some means of providing for myself. Here there is no chance. And I fancy that in the Superior's spite, the anticipation of this probable result determined him to send me to this place."

Padre Salvatore ceased speaking, and we both remained silent.

After a time I said: "Your sad experience and kind advice have saved me from a fatal error."

"Then," replied he with a sad but benevolent smile, "I have not suffered quite in vain."

"Remember also," returned I, "what you were to Petronio in his last moments."

"I shall ever thank God who permitted me that consolation; but let me tell you, my friend, it was a mere chance, or rather, to speak more reverently, a special providence, that I came in time. No thanks to my *Padre Guardiano*, who positively refused my earnest petition the evening before, to be allowed to pass the night near my dying friend. Had poor Petronio expired two hours sooner, I could have done nothing for him."

"And why," asked I, "were you denied your request?"

"Simply from that petty gratification in the wanton exercise of power, which grows by habitual indulgence."

The more I meditate on all Padre Salvatore said, and on the practical teachings growing out of his tale, the more I see that monastic life in general is a mere sanctimonious glorification of selfishness, under the pretension of superior Godliness.

Human sympathies or the sense of human responsibility, no longer soften or ennoble life for the cenobite. The poorest part of self alone is left, cut off from the expanding reciprocities of human life and affections. *Self* in the individual, in the house, or in the order, is the great idol of the cloister.

Some exceptions there are, such as Padre Salvatore, but these are men of rare virtue, victims of a false and cruel system, the more to be pitied and admired.

It is with sadness I admit this, for in proportion as each day has rendered more faint the hope of ever recovering Mary, I have clung more and more to my imaginings of future peace in some holy sanctuary.

I came hither supported by two illusions. The one Padre Salvatore has entirely swept away. The other is vanishing every day.

I am sick at heart.

But it is time to brace myself to face life as it is. Each must bear a cross, be it in the world or in the convent; better where we may help those we meet along the road, to carry their burthen, and sweeten by sharing their toil and sorrow. When I reflect upon the fate of a man like Padre Salvatore, I ought to be thankful for the blessings still left me in my dear grand-mother, in Alice, in Reginald, and not least in the image stamped on my mind, of such a nature as that of this monk, and the proud privilege of his friendship.

To-day I have received the two last letters I expected; they are quite useless. To-morrow I return to Genoa. This afternoon I took leave

of Padre Salvatore with deep gratitude and regret.

Here end the extracts from Mark's journal.

We may however as well add here, that a few weeks later he received from the Friar the following letter :—

"My Dear Friend,

"I told you that those of my well-wishers, who kindly undertook to clear me with the Bishop, might do me an evil service. They have indeed succeeded in having my licence of confession restored to me, but since that, my *Padre Guardiano* has found out that I am wanted in a convent of our order situated far up among the mountains. A dreary cold place enough. If I am allowed to remain there in peace, well and good: if not, I shall profit by the liberty given through the late law. I shall ask for a passport and making my way to Switzerland, try to earn there a maintenance as day labourer; if I should not after all accomplish that modest aim,

I hope that I have Christian humility enough to beg a piece of bread from a fellow creature without losing my self respect.

"I shall always think of you, my friend, with comfort and affection. Let me know the events of your fate.

"SALVATORE."

Monforte.

CHAPTER XII.

So Mark returned to Genoa, and although his journey had been fruitless as far as regarded its main object, his presence cheered his grandmother, made Alice's eyes sparkle with pleasure, and he felt his own spirits raised as he embraced them.

They had little good news to impart to each other, still it was a great comfort to lament, to wonder, and to call up faint hopes together.

It was now evident loss of time for the family to remain any longer in the north of Italy. If search further on could be of any avail, it must be undertaken at once. Reginald volunteered to carry out what little still remained to be done in Piedmont.

So we will leave our dear friends very busy with their preparations for departure towards

Florence, Rome, and Naples, and carry our reader back to about a month after Mary's disappearance from home, and follow Mrs. Weston, a young English widow, travelling with her maid from Switzerland to join part of her family at Milan.

After issuing from the grand pass of the Simplon, the travellers drove rapidly across the verdant, smiling, circular valley, which lies on the Italian side of the mountain, to the pretty little town of Domo d'Ossola and there alighted at the best inn.

They were shewn into a moderately good room, rather poorly furnished, but as it was airy, had a pleasant view, and Mrs. Weston was too much used to travelling, to give herself airs or be difficult, she expressed herself satisfied with her quarters in answer to the query of the waiter, who shewed her up to them.

Before he left the room, she begged him to find a messenger to convey to its address a letter, which she put into his hand.

The superscription was to l'Illustrissimo Signor N——, Presidente de Tribunale di . . . . . .

The man opened his eyes wide and answered

promptly, "Immediately, madam. I will take it myself," then vanished.

Before Mrs. Weston thought he could have reached the street, he was already returned with the answer, that the Signor Presidente would immediately wait upon the lady.

"If the Signora will permit me," said the zealous *Cameriere*, I will shew her into a room more fitting to receive the Signor Presidente."

"As you will," returned Mrs. Weston, and she followed her guide down stairs to a large handsomely furnished room on the first floor.

A girl was sitting at work on the long iron-railed balcony, into which the room door opened, and which ran along three sides of the square court which the house enclosed.

"Rosina!" cried the waiter, "quick, help bring down my lady's things."

And in two minutes Mrs. Weston found herself installed in the handsomest apartment in the house. A good carpet under her feet, a handsome cover on the table, pretty white embroidered curtains to the windows and the bed; all for the sake of a letter directed to *Signor Presidente*.

"It is well," said she laughing, to her maid, "to have a friend at court; grandeur however requires some sacrifices, we have lost the pretty view we had up stairs."

In compliance with the letter, which was one of recommendation from a friend of his at Geneva, the gentleman soon presented himself, and after the mutual compliments, usual on such occasions, he offered to conduct Mrs. Weston to see what little the town and its environs could afford to interest a stranger.

The chief curiosity he pointed out, a very short distance from the town, was a calvary or set of twelve diminutive chapels placed in succession up a steep hill, on the top of which stood a sanctuary.

In each chapel is to be seen a sculptured group of figures, large as life and coloured, representing the various incidents of our Saviour's progress to the Golgotha.

Mrs. Weston never ventured an opinion on matters of art, she only knew what pleased or impressed herself, without attempting critical analysis. It might be bad taste, or the effect of novelty, but she was much struck by these sculp-

tures, the rude work of nameless artists, natives of these Alpine valleys, some centuries back. She felt especially moved by the attitude of the holy mother, holding out her hands towards her divine son bending under the cross.

After inspecting the second chapel, Mrs. Weston allowed that her strength was not equal to going up to the Sanctuary, the object, she was told, of a yearly pilgrimage among the neighbouring populations, besides being now and then sought out by some individual pious votary.

The obliging Signor N—— proposed returning to the town, and on the way asked Mrs. Weston whether she was a Protestant, to which she answered in the affirmative, adding the question: "Why this inquiry?"

"I ought rather," said Signor N——, "to have shaped my inquiry otherwise: what I wished to know was, whether you would object to visit a convent?"

"Not in the least, I should on the contrary, rather like it," returned the lady.

"Then," replied the President, "I will request the favour of you to do so, and I will explain

the motive of my request. You have heard of the reverend father Rosmini, no doubt," continued he.

"No," answered Mrs. Weston, "but never mind, go on."

"I must tell you then that father Rosmini is a learned and distinguished churchman, who enjoys a high, wide spread and well merited reputation."

He is at the head of a religious establishment for men, founded by himself on the banks of the Lake Maggiore, and he has besides established in this town a community of Sisters of Charity, directed specially to the care and instruction of the poor.

Well, some weeks back, Signor S——, a lawyer in this town, father Rosmini's agent for the direction of the property belonging to the Sisters of Charity, received from the reverend man a note, directing him to meet on a day named, at the arrival of the diligence from Switzerland, two ladies and a priest travelling with a young English lady under their care. This last named person was to be received as an inmate in the Community, and to be treated with all care and regard. My friend strictly

like in Doctor Antonio

followed his instructions: the party arrived, were led to the convent, introduced their young charge as wishing to spend some time in religious seclusion, took leave, quitted the town immediately, the young lady remaining in the convent. Then, and not till then, it was perceived that she spoke not a word either of our dialect or of Italian; and neither the sisters or any one in the whole town speak or understand one syllable of English. So that hitherto none but the very limited communication carried on by signs has been possible.

"No one can find out who or what the stranger is, or the real object of her being brought here. There has been quite an excited feeling about the matter in the town, and all sorts of reports are afloat. Some say the young lady is immensely rich and has run away from a suitor, her family wished to force upon her. Some that she has unparalleled beauty, and had captivated a lover of rank far above her own, and that his friends have had her carried out of his sight. Others hint that it may be a member of the royal family of England desirous of becoming, in secret, a Catholic.

like the Stuarts

"Every one wonders that a prudent man like the

reverend Rosmini should lend his aid to so mysterious an affair.

"Now you seem providentially sent to satisfy our curiosity, and a sort of interest which deserves a better name, if you will be so obliging as to accompany my friend Signor S—— and myself to the convent and act as our interpreter. I have never yet beheld this wonder, my friend alone, besides the inhabitants of the convent, has seen your young countrywoman, and I shall be very grateful for this opportunity."

Mrs. Weston assented willingly to the proposed visit, her interest being excited by what she had heard.

Signor S—— was sent for and speedily appeared. He was delighted at a chance of penetrating the mystery. "It is a real service, madam, which you will render the sisters; they do their best to attend upon their guest, and to supply her wants and wishes, but they have no means of knowing if they divine them rightly. In short it is a painful and awkward situation on both sides."

Mrs. Weston and the two gentlemen went to

the convent; Signor S—— sent in a message to the Superior by the portress, who returned immediately and ushered the party into a small room, white-washed, with a stone floor, and very plain furniture.

After they had waited some time, an inner door opened and two of the sisters entered, dressed in grey cloth dresses and large stiff white caps, with a white band across the forehead in lieu of hair; their hands were folded under their large sleeves, and they came in with their eyes cast to the floor, but soon raised them in intense curiosity towards the stranger lady; the two gentlemen were not unknown to them.

They were followed by a young lady in ordinary dress, but whose folded hands and downcast eyes strictly imitated the bearing of the nuns, and were much more rigidly maintained, after a first agitated glance at the visitors, as she entered, followed instantly by recovery of perfect composure.

She was small in stature, but very pretty and graceful, and even her adopted monastic carriage could not conceal a certain aristocratic loftiness.

Mrs. Weston went up with a feeling of kindness to the young creature, and while she courteseyed, held out her hand; this gesture was ignored by the other party.

The lady then explained the motive of her visit, made at the request of the gentlemen present, and which she hoped might not be looked upon as an intrusion from a stranger, who claimed at this distance from home, the title of countrywoman.

The young lady, at these words, gracefully motioned her visitors to a seat and placed herself next to Mrs. Weston, who now went on to translate the questions suggested by either of her companions or by the sisters, who sat by in a state of evident eagerness, their eyes fixed on the two English women, listening with open ears to a language they had never heard before, not one word of which they could catch, and waiting open mouthed for answers to their long pent up queries.

All that could be gathered from replies given with considerable reserve and coolness was, that her object in leaving England for Italy, was to spend some time in a convent of Sisters of

Charity with a view to become thoroughly acquainted with the rules and discipline of the order; to enable her on her return to her native country to establish there a religious house of the same description.

She was then asked how it happened that Rosmini had sent her to a place where she could neither understand or be understood by anyone.

She replied that the father might have his own good reasons, or that he might be unaware of her ignorance of the language. The father had never seen her; his instructions respecting her had been received by her travelling companions in Paris, from whence they had brought her to D——.

The gentlemen then proposed that a note should be written to Signor Rosmini of which Mrs. Weston should be the bearer, as she would pass his residence, on her road next day; and the diligence stopping for dinner hard by, would allow her time to see the father and furnish him with all necessary details. The gentlemen both agreed it would be right to request that the young novice should be transferred to a house, where some one could understand her language, or that some

person should be sent to Domo d'Ossola, charged to interpret for her, and give her instruction in Italian.

Mrs. Weston translated this very reasonable plan, expressing the pleasure she should feel in doing anything in her power to serve her countrywoman.

But the young girl's immediate answer was a hasty "No, no," and for the first time losing some of the remarkable calm she had hitherto maintained, she said, "I beg that no such thing may be done; if you wish to gratify me, I entreat you will refuse any such commission. The father sent me here, and I wish to remain exactly as he placed me."

The great inconvenience of the want of the language was again urged.

"Only think," said the President, "if this poor young creature, were to have a headache, or be ever so ill, she could not explain her ailment to the Doctor."

"Very distressing," joined in the lawyer, "very distressing indeed."

Mrs. Weston interpreted this strongest argument, to which the only reply was with a gentle smile.

"I am in perfect good health, and I trust to Providence to keep me so while it is needful."

The sisters then urged the painful responsibility of their situation, and of their constant doubt whether their guest, in spite of all their endeavours, was satisfied or dissatisfied.

"It is true," answered the young girl, "that I do not understand what the sisters say, but they smile and that is all I wish. I am as happy all day as a bird in a tree."

The sisters laughed with pleasure at the translation of this assurance.

After a moment's pause Mrs. Weston said: "Excuse the observation, but you must surely have met with some great misfortune to bring you to such a resolution as you have taken."

"I have not known," returned her interlocutor thoughtfully, "what in the world is generally called sorrow; my trials have been those of inward struggles after spiritual truth." She hesitated a moment and then added: "I was not always a Catholic."

"Your family then is Protestant?"

"My brother and sister are so."

"Have you still a father and mother?"

"No, I lost them when very young."

"No doubt your brother and sister objected to the step upon which you have ventured."

"They did not like it at first, but they were obliged to make up their minds to it," and there was a slight compression of the lips and a motion of the head, which implied the remembrance of victory after contest.

"You are very young to take such a serious determination," observed Mrs. Weston, gazing at the youthful creature before her.

"I was of age and mistress of my actions before I left home!" replied she steadily.

Again there was a moment's silence, and then Mrs. Weston said: Allow me one more inquiry, nevertheless; as a proof that it springs, not from idle or impertinent curiosity, but from a sincere interest in yourself, and your very singular situation; do not answer, even by a negative, if what I am going to say does not meet your wishes. "I have many correspondents in England, and

before long I shall return thither myself. Will you, by furnishing me with the name and address of your relations, enable me to give them the assurance, that I have had the pleasure of seeing you well and satisfied."

The young girl flushed to the very roots of her hair, and resolutely turned away in silence.

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Weston, "nothing can be further from my wish than to introduce an unpleasant subject."

The gentlemen who had remained silent during this little *aparte* dialogue between the two Englishwomen, now begged Mrs. Weston once more to press their advice, to which the young lady answered decidedly.

"If you desire to oblige me you will allow no change to be attempted for me, and you will refuse any message of the kind. I should liked to have known Italian, merely to learn the rule more quickly, but it will all come right in proper time. No doubt the reverend father knows what is best for me. I particularly wish that every thing should remain exactly as he directed."

During the last few minutes the bell for vespers

had begun to ring, and Mrs. Weston could see in the looks of the English girl, frequently turned towards the quarter whence the sound came, that her sole anxiety was to get to her devotions, while the two holy sisters, evidently thinking little of the call to prayer, would willingly have remained, drinking in the account which Mrs. Weston translated of the latter part of her conference with the young stranger.

But as it appeared that nothing now remained to be done or said, the visitors rose to depart.

"I will only detain you," said Mrs. Weston to the young girl, "while I repeat my readiness to serve you in any way. I shall not leave the town before to-morrow at ten. If, when you think over our conversation, you should change your mind on any point, or find any other commands for me, I am at the Hotel . . . . Allow me to leave also my address in England. Any letters sent there, would be forwarded during my stay on the Continent." And with a friendly gesture she took the girl's passive hand, adding: "At least it must have been a pleasure for you to hear some words of English."

"Not so much perhaps as you think, but I am grateful for your courtesy and kind intentions, and beg you also to give my fitting thanks to these gentlemen."

With these words and a graceful bow, she left the room followed by the sisters, and the visiters retired.

On their way from the convent to Signor N——'s house, where dinner awaited them, Mrs. Weston turning to her companions exclaimed: "What an oversight it was in me not to ask that young creature, whether she can speak French, which might very much lessen the difficulty of the situation, so many people in Italy understand French."

"Truly," returned Mr. S——, "knowing the lady to be English, I never thought but of her native language. However I am ashamed to say that I should hardly converse better in French, and the poor sisters still less, but our friend the President will come to our assistance in that respect, if French will do."

"With all my heart," answered Signor N——, "and no later than to-morrow I will return with

you, S——, to act upon the hint this kind and clever lady has given, and which shews us how very greatly we have been wanting in ingenuity not to have hit upon so simple an idea before."

Mrs. Weston departed the next day without having heard further from the fair incognita, travelled on to Milan, to Venice, and elsewhere, and the meeting at Domo d'Ossola soon faded from her recollection.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUTSTRIPPING the speed even of rail-road travelling, we hasten back to the Leslies, in time to find them still busy getting ready for their departure from Genoa. Alice is packing trunks. Reginald is bringing heaps of letters of introduction to influential persons in the different provinces of middle and southern Italy; he is impressing all sorts of instructions upon his friends, of which Mark is taking note in his pocket book.

The whole family felt that they were losing a prop in leaving this their active kind-hearted friend.

The next day was fixed for their departure; they were to travel by easy stages, with a *vetturino*, in order not to overtask Mrs. Leslie's strength.

Early the following morning, Reginald was

sallying forth to spend the last hours with his friends, when the following note was put into his hand.

"Hotel Fveder, Genoa.

"DEAR REGINALD,

"I am just landed from Civita Vecchia, and shall proceed almost immediately by rail to Turin. I cannot pass through Genoa without having a glimpse of you and shaking hands.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"SOPHY."

Now Reginald liked his cousin much, but her summons could not be more ill-timed. "No man cares to have even *his dearest meetings*, the sport of contingencies," and most people know the annoyance of being called two ways at once. Now here was Dr. Morton, in haste to get to the Leslies, obliged to hurry quite in another direction. Moreover, though glad to see Sophy, he was vexed that she had left Rome, where he knew she had spent the winter, and where she was at the head of the list of persons, for whom he had given letters to his friend.

which opera?

After a moment's hesitation and something very like an unorthodox ejaculation, he cleared his frown with a shake of his head, and whistling the air of "Figaro quà, Figaro là," walked off towards the Hotel Fveder, thinking as he moved along rapidly, "Well, it will be a pleasure to have a look at old Sophy, though I have not a quarter of an hour to give her."

So he entered her room in more radiant humour than when he set out.

Let us also observe in justice to the lady, that the invidious epithet *old*, which the gentleman had mentally uttered, applied rather to the length of years they had known each other, than to the age of the fair one, who really did not count more than twenty-six summers.

There is always something pleasant and exciting in the meeting of the friends of our childhood. The cousins shook hands, embraced, chatted and laughed, or conversed gravely by turns. Sophy talked of her travels; she had been here and there, had seen this and that.

At last Reginald said: "I am very glad to see you, but I could have wished to put off the plea-

Reginald rushing into their sitting-room, with an unknown lady on his arm, waving his hat and crying: "Eureka! Eureka!" then adding, as he led Sophy to Mrs. Leslie, "here, my dear friend, is a lady come to give you news of Mary."

Next minute, Mrs. Weston, surrounded by the eager, wondering party, was in the midst of her story.

Not a doubt remained in the mind of any one, that the person in question was really Mary. Domo d'Ossola was one of the few places at the furthest extremity of the kingdom, which had as yet escaped Reginald's and Mark's methodical inquiries. The discovery broke upon them like a glorious burst of sunshine.

In the midst of the first emotion came a summon from the *vetturino* at the door, to send down the trunks.

The first thing to do was gladly to dismiss the carriage, and the party kept possession of their rooms.

The next step was to consider, now that the hiding place of the lost lamb was found, how best to secure its return to the fold.

Many things were to be considered and conciliated with prudence and foresight, or all might still be lost even now. The party consulted, proposed, rejected, pondered, and talked for some time without coming to any conclusion. But by degrees out of this chaos something like a plan was elicited.

Mark, after a thoughtful silence, expressed a doubt whether he ought to present himself to Mary at this crisis. Mrs. Leslie agreed with him and proposed going to Domo d'Ossola with Alice.

Dr. Morton laid his positive medical veto upon this journey for his patient.

Alice eagerly offered to go alone. Reginald declared that should not be, he would get a brother physician to fill his place for some days, and accompany her.

When Mrs. Weston had listened some time to the discussion, she declared herself so much interested in the affair, that she was ready to put off continuing her journey to Geneva for some days, and accompany Alice.

The lady was a widow, responsible for her actions to no one, and she declared that the friends

who were expecting her in Switzerland, would not break their hearts if she wrote to them, that they must wait another week or fortnight for the pleasure of seeing her.

On many accounts Mrs. Weston did certainly appear the most eligible person, who could have been selected to bear Alice company; and Mrs. Leslie's scruples about deranging that lady's plans for strangers, were soon set aside.

"Pray, my dear madam!" exclaimed Mrs. Weston, "do not use so unkind a word as 'strangers.' We have been intimate friends I do not know how long—ever since I came into the room."

"Mrs. Leslie," said Reginald, "let me tell you that you will confer an especial favour on my cousin, by consenting. Her old nurse used always to say; 'Aye, Miss Sophy, is in the best of her pleasure, when she does some out of the way thing.' I think," he added with a very affectionate glance at the lady, "that you are not much changed since that time." So then, settled points:

No. 1.—Mrs. Weston and Alice go together.

No. 2.—They start to-morrow.

The rest will all be arranged in due succession. Nothing like order to come at clear thought and efficient action.

After some further consultation, it was deemed expedient for Mrs. Leslie to write to her grand-daughter a letter calculated to induce her return, by doing away with some scruples that might cause her to hesitate.

This letter of which Alice was to be the bearer, ran thus.

"My Darling Mary,

"I was very ill after you went away. As soon as I could travel we came abroad in search of you. It would pain you if I were to tell you how much sorrow and anxiety we have suffered in consequence of your disappearance. I will only say all is now forgotten in the joy of knowing at last where you are.

"I am not strong enough to accompany Alice, or I should hasten to press my lost child at once to my bosom.

"Grant one thing only, my darling, to your grand-mother's prayer. Concede to me a single

year, return, and spend that time with me. If at the end of a twelve-month you still persist in wishing to leave those who love you, they will bow their heads, and no further opposition will be made. You shall go as your desire directs with my blessing.

"Who knows what may happen in a few months; an old woman's life is uncertain.

"Let no thought of Mark disturb you; during the begged for year he solemnly binds himself to abstain from all reference to subjects personal to himself; they shall remain in abeyance as well as your final decision. He means soon to return to England, and in the meantime his residence here will be with Reginald Morton, who has been a true friend to us in Genoa.

"I hope, I trust, my beloved Mary, that you will return at least for this year to

"Your old loving

"GRANDMOTHER."

It was determined that Mark should remain with his grand-mother during Alice's absence, and if the object of her journey was attained, a

line by the post could give him timely notice to take up his quarters in Reginald's house.

The travellers set out next morning and slept that night at Novara. The following day they reached Avona and travelled along the banks of the beautiful Lake Maggiore, rich in the varied charm of inland water and mountain scenery, till they stopped at the Inn at Stresa.

Near this village, at a little distance from the road on a grassy eminence, stand some large brick buildings. Forms clothed in priestly gowns are seen moving in and out. This is the religious establishment for men superintended by father R—— who resides there.

Directed from the Hotel, the two ladies walked up to the dwelling of the Priest, and announcing themselves as strangers who desired an interview, were at once ushered into his study.

It was a large stone floored white-washed room, one side of which was filled by a book-case. An oil painting representing a religious subject hung over the chimney, a small carved crucifix was placed beneath. A large table covered with books and papers stood in the middle; before it was a

carved oak arm-chair, and a few straw ones were placed along the walls. Such was the appearance of the apartment.

Mrs. Weston felt Alice's arm tremble within hers, and spoke some words of encouragement.

The next moment an inner door opened and father R—— appeared.

Something in his aspect, as he bowed politely to the ladies, reminded Alice of the Abbé Moreau, and she felt re-assured. She rose and went forwards. "*Reverendo,*" she said in imperfect Italian, "I come to implore you to restore my sister to her family." And then she stopped struggling for mastery over rising emotion.

The Priest looked surprised, but seeing the agitation of the young girl, bade her courteously sit down and recover herself, at the same time waving her companion to a seat, and taking his own. His observant eye glanced rapidly at the two faces and seemed to ask explanation of Mrs. Weston.

In a few words she stated the purpose of the visit. Alice then entered with renewed courage on the subject, and warning as she went on, grew

eloquent in feeling although her expressions were often at fault.

The father looked benevolently at her, and Mrs. Weston let her make out her own story, for it was evident she excited a great interest in her hearer, so the lady merely added the details of her visit at Domo d'Ossola.

The Priest listened to the whole relation with the observant attention of one accustomed to read countenances, remaining silent, except when here or there he put a short pertinent question.

Then opening a drawer, he took out a paper and casting his eyes deliberately over it said: "Yes, here in the list of the Community at D—— is the name you mention. Mary Leslie, aged twenty-one years complete, native of England. Preparing for the noviciate. And here is a letter in reference to that name from my Paris correspondent, who asked directions from me respecting the young person. He states positively the full concurrence and even request of the family authorising her English confessor to direct to me this young person, mistress of her own actions, and full of a fervent vocation. Read, yourself," said he pointing to the passage.

"Oh!" exclaimed Alice on glancing at the paper, "you understand French, then I can explain myself so much better." And she went on in that language to explain that Mrs. Leslie's consent and authorisation, referred to in this letter, had been, as it were, extorted by Mary from her grand-mother.

"Your sister, poor child, has been carried away by inexperienced zeal."

"It is all owing to the English Priest," said Alice quickly.

"I would fain not think ill of my brethren in any land," observed the father mildly, "and we must not condemn any one unheard, I believe," he added smiling, "that this is even your English law. So now we will rather think of remedying the evil, which fortunately is not irretrievable, than of casting blame anywhere. The Signora Leslie claims her grand-daughter and has full right to do so."

Alice here conscientiously observed that her sister was legally entitled to dispose of herself.

"But your grand-mother's moral claim in her wandering child is not less strong," observed the

Priest, "and your sister's duty is to go back to the parent, whose health you tell me has been injured by the young girl's imprudence. However," he continued in a conciliating tone, "as nothing worse than rashness can be laid to her charge, and she has always been under honourable protection and guidance, I trust that the joy of her return may restore the lady's health, and obtain pardon for a young creature, whose fault has been want of judgment and excess of zeal. Her youth should plead for indulgence."

"Indulgence! oh, father, pardon me, that is not the word, joy, delight, are expressions too poor for what we shall feel if we see her at home again. Poor grand-mamma begs as a boon for one year, one little year. See what she writes." And Alice rapidly translated Mrs. Leslie's letter into French.

Father R—— was evidently touched. "Your grand-mother is a holy woman," said he. "She would respect a permanent vocation, even at the cost of her own happiness." He then wrote a few lines.

"This," said he, "is to the Superior of the

convent at D——, to desire her to resign her *postulante* to you. And now," added he taking up the pen afresh, "I will send a few lines to your sister, a few words to point out what I consider her duty to be, since, poor child, she is so implicit in her obedience to me," and he looked with a smile at Mrs. Weston.

"As to the point of the language," continued he, "I confess I never adverted to the possibility of your sister being ignorant of Italian, the thing not having been alluded to by my correspondent, and I never having seen the young person myself. There, now I admit, was a want of that strict and active superintendence, which is the duty of all on whom depends the direction and well being of many. Our errors stare us in the face to mortify us at every step, young lady, and remind us of the frailty of human nature."

Alice felt awed by his serious tone, and she looked with silent reverence at the Priest thus sternly rebuking himself.

He presently finished his second letter and put both into Alice's hand, saying benignantly: "Go, my child, and guide the strayed lamb back to the

fold. May happiness attend you, and when you return to your own country, remember with some good will a Catholic Priest, who has done his best to satisfy your just claim."

Alice found a flow of words to express her fervent gratitude; the two ladies took a respectful leave of the venerable Priest, and hastened back to the hotel.

Furnished with the reverend father's credentials, they set out early next morning and soon entered the mountain gorges leading to Domo d'Ossola.

On their arrival, having taken rooms at the hotel, Alice enclosed her grand-mother's letter with that of the reverend father to Mary, under a cover addressed to the Superior, containing also the Priest's letter to her.

She added a few lines stating that she would wait upon the Superior in an hour, and requesting permission to see her sister.

The parcel was dispatched to the convent, and Alice and Mrs. Weston had to while away, as best they might, the longest hour they had known.

At last the moment came and they set out for the convent; they were received by the same

portress who had admitted Mrs. Weston a few months before, and were shewn into the same parlour.

Alice trembled so excessively she could hardly stand. The next moment the Superior entered, and courteously begged her visiters to be seated.

"I have received the father's commands," said she addressing herself to Alice, "and your sister is ready to attend you. Her vocation edified all the community, but the reverend father knows best."

The nun then proposed that Alice should go to Mary in her cell. Mrs. Weston discreetly remained in the parlour, while Alice, with a beating heart, followed one of the sisters deputed by the Superior to shew her the way.

They passed through several passages till they came to one into which opened on each side a row of doors; the nun, throwing one back, immediately retired, and there stood Mary in the middle of the room.

She threw her arms round the neck of Alice, and exclaiming: "Poor grand-mamma," burst into a passion of tears.

Alice by turns wept, or caressed and soothed her sister.

When the first agitation was passed, Mary said: "The reverend father writes that I must go back with you; he says I have been very wrong, and have much to atone for. I feel this to be very true. Alice, dear, good, unreproaching Alice! Let us go now. I am quite ready."

Alice bade her not hurry, but compose herself a little more, and went on to prepare her for meeting Mrs. Weston.

"And so after all," said Mary, "it is through her you traced me. Well, I suppose I must not be angry with her, but grateful." And then she turned from the subject to ask anxiously several questions about Mrs. Leslie's health, which Alice endeavoured to answer as satisfactorily as she could.

"Now I am quite strong enough to depart," resumed Mary at the end of a few minutes, and she led the way out.

When they came down stairs, all the sisters clustered round Mary, and took an affectionate leave of her.

"*O cara si ricordi di me*," (dear, do not forget me). "*Si conservi carissima*," (take care of yourself, dearest).

"*Noi pregheremo per lei*," (we will pray for you). And many other such expressions were heard on every side, to which Mary, much moved, returned gratefully, affectionate answers.

"Just as she is beginning to talk like us, she is going away," said the Superior, "what a pity! She is a sweet patient creature, we had all learned to love her. But we must not argue with the reverend father's orders, and her grand-mother's request."

A few more parting words, then the heavy convent door closed, and Mary stood without between Alice and Mrs. Weston. Dusk was coming on and the *Ave Maria* was sounding as they hastened on to the hotel. It was not far, but Mary was so bewildered and shaken by the sudden transition, and the strong emotion, that when the ladies reached their room, she fell almost fainting on a chair.

Alice was much alarmed, but Mrs. Weston pronounced this to be a mere nervous spasm; she

administered some drops of ether, and ordered bed and repose for her patient. And truly the effect of these restoratives proved the lady to have judged correctly.

When Alice had seen her sister revived, and afterwards fallen into a composed sleep, she consulted with Mrs. Weston and it was agreed that Mary should be kept in bed the next day, that on the succeeding morning she might start perfectly restored. This delay would also have the advantage, that Mrs. Leslie would be sure to receive twenty-four hours before their arrival Alice's letter, announcing the glad tidings of Mary's return. "We will make use of time here," added Mrs. Weston, "to call upon the worthy President and his family, for in fact he was the primary cause of our finding the runaway, and has a full claim to our thanks."

So said, so done. The letter was duly despatched, and no one was ever more surprised and gratified than the President when he received next morning a visit from *la Signora Inglese*, this time accompanied by a *Signorina*, and to hear the end of the story, which did not interest him less than the beginning.

In the course of the day the President, his lady and two daughters, returned the visit in state; they were cordially received by Mrs. Weston and Alice. Mary was in her room, much to the disappointment of the ladies, who would fain have got, if only a peep at the heroine of a romance, which had so much struck the imagination of the quiet inhabitants of Domo d'Ossola, where still remains the tradition of the occurrence, embellished by many fanciful ornaments.

The President and his lady pressed the travellers to dine with them, but Mrs. Weston and Alice excused themselves, alleging that they could not leave Mary. So there was a gracious parting, and next day the travellers set forth for Genoa.

Relieved from the anxiety, which had weighed upon their minds as they had passed along the same road two days before, Alice and Mrs. Weston were in a frame of mind in which beautiful nature is especially grateful. Even Mary, in spite of herself, felt the inspiring influence, and gazed with enjoyment upon the Alpine peaks receding behind each other, the ærial tints of distance hanging around their summits, and their sides

green with pastures sloping down to the water's edge; then further on upon that *Isola Bella*, in which taste and fortune have gathered tree and shrub from every land, where the perfume of the Magnolia mixes with the resinous scent of the Scotch fir, and from the shelter of the seven marble terraces the orange and the lemon flower cast their rich odour on the air. And further on still the eye rested, at the opposite end of the lake, upon the smiling beauty of the rich verdant plains of Lombardy, stretching away to the horizon.

The party stopped at Arona for the night. Before retiring to rest, the two sisters stepped into the balcony of their chamber, which overlooked the lake. Though it was November, the air felt pleasantly mild, the nearly full moon rose from behind the mountains opposite, and sent a broad tremulous silver line across the waters, while the rest of the world seemed to sleep in the grey darkness of a clear autumnal night. No sound was heard except the slight splashing waves that broke whisperingly upon the shore!

The two girls stood for a while side by side, silently drinking in the influence of the scene.

At length Mary drew a long sigh, put her arm gently round her sister's, pressing her cheek to hers, and then they betook themselves to a quiet rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

In spite of all preparation, the moment of meeting was one of strong agitation for Mrs. Leslie and her lost child.

"Can you forgive me grand-mamma?" sobbed Mary.

Passionate kisses and gentle tears, as she was pressed to her grand-mother's bosom, answered better than words.

The first emotion being passed, they sat together on the sofa, holding each other by the hand. Mrs. Leslie seemed as if she could not look enough at her Mary.

Then Alice and Mrs. Weston began talking of the incidents of the journey, especially of the road back, so that Mary might join in the conversation, and soon all became composed, and the

travellers retired to their rooms to take off their wraps before tea.

"Oh! how ill grand-mamma looks!" exclaimed Mary, as soon as she was alone with her sister. "How wrong, how sinful I have been!"

"Why," returned Alice cheeringly, "grand-mamma is already better than she was, and now you are come, I am sure she will get quite well. You will be like the golden lance, we used to read about, whose privilege it was to cure the wounds it made."

"You were always a good comforter, Alice," replied Mary somewhat soothed.

They returned to the drawing-room, and once more Mrs. Leslie sat at the tea table between her two grand-daughters, and smiled and talked so cheerfully that Mary began to hope, that indeed Alice's happy prediction would be verified. Mrs. Weston was a pleasant addition to the party.

But all this time no sight, no word of Mark. Where is he? Retired in his new quarters at Dr. Morton's, near the Acqua Sola. And at this very moment, to relieve the hurry of his spirits, he is walking with Reginald up and down a part

of the gardens, calculating the probably precise instant of Mary's arrival, and drawing imaginary pictures of what she might feel or say, or do.

"It was my own proposal," said he, "to withdraw as I have done, and to suspend all claims upon her; my judgment pointed out the necessity of this course; yet, I cannot but feel it hard, that when my glad heart flies to meet her, I am the only one cut off. Who knows whether her affections will ever return to me."

"Come, come," returned his companion, "faint heart never won fair lady. Now we have got her out of that hole at Domo d'Ossola, all will go right. Why, man! do you not feel that you must surely be born under the most lucky star in heaven, to have actually found the needle in a bundle of hay? I will confess to you now, that I looked upon it, from the beginning, as a very despairing matter indeed. That miracle performed, the rest is a mere matter of course, a question of a few days more or less. Only have a little patience. But, oh! these lovers! they think 'patience is sottish.'"

So rattled on Reginald to beguile the time.

It was thought prudent for Dr. Morton to delay his visit at Mrs. Leslie's till the next day.

When he did go, he felt that he could not have recognised the Mary of Grove House, in the demure, nun-like person, who with hands folded and eyes cast down, sat beside her grand-mother, till her former self flashed out again as, suddenly looking up, an expression of warm and affectionate gratitude lighted her features, and, by a strong effort of will, she extended her hand to him saying: "Reginald, I thank and bless you for your kind care of grand-mamma, and all of them since they have been here."

Reginald took the little proffered hand, shook it heartily, and then fell into easy talk with all the party.

It may well be supposed that on his return home, every word and every look had to be recounted, described, and commented upon to Mark.

"Why—no," answered Dr. Morton to a concluding question, "she did not mention you. Now do not look so disconcerted; I take her not speaking, as a proof, that she was thinking the more of you."

The correctness of Reginald's view of the matter seemed borne out after a few days, during which no one had dared to breathe the name of Mark in Mary's presence, by her saying abruptly to Alice one morning.

"Why does not Mark come to see grandmamma? It is very wrong. Does he suppose that my presence is to deprive our grand-mother of that of her favourite grandson? This would be just the way to drive me away again. Why can't he come in and out as Reginald does?"

"Well," said Alice, with brightening looks, and a heart leaping for joy, "tell Reginald so, I hear his voice in the drawing-room."

"Tell him yourself, Alice, before I come in."

"Very well," and Alice went forthwith to execute her welcome commission.

In consequence next day Mark accompanied Reginald in his accustomed visit at Mrs. Leslie's.

His agitation was so strong when he came near the door, that he was obliged to stop, turn back, and walk several times up and down the street before he could enter.

"Welcome home, Mary," said he, as trembling

with emotion he went up to her, where as usual she was sitting by Mrs. Leslie, and held out his hand.

As if she saw not the gesture, she remained with her hands tight folded, but her colour rapidly changed from red to white, and from white to red, while in a voice steadied by a visible effort, and with a friendly look and nod she said: "I am very glad to see you, Mark. Sit down there," (pointing to a seat on the other side of Mrs. Leslie) "that is your place. Now, grand-mamma, another of your liege subjects is returned to his post."

There was a silence, which Mary was the first to break.

"Reginald, you think it better for grand-mamma to spend the winter here than in England?"

"Yes I do, decidedly," was the answer.

"Then, Mark," resumed Mary, "unless you have some pressing motive with which I am not acquainted, you ought not to leave Genoa."

"If you think so," replied Mark delighted, "I will remain."

"We are not to be," returned Mary, "like Castor and Pollux of old, who never could brighten the same hemisphere together; it is quite bad enough that Oliver is obliged to remain in England; grand-mamma ought to have at least one grand-son with her abroad. So you are to stay."

"Spoken like a very Queen Mab," said Reginald, "of course Mark will fulfil your fairy majesty's commands."

"Not my commands," answered Mary quickly, "but his duty." She then fell into silence, and took up her work upon which she kept her eyes fixed.

Alice staved off an awkward pause by asking Morton some questions about a house in the country, he had recommended for Mrs. Leslie. All began talking of its situation, and of little plans for the winter residence.

In the course of the conversation, Mary's eyes once glanced at her cousin, and she observed:

"I think that a season passed in this southern climate will do Mark good too, he looks delicate. Dr. Reginald you ought to take better care of your friends."

"Poor doctors cannot be made responsible for every thing," returned Mark smiling. "Depend upon it, my stay here will set me up again."

The first meeting thus got over, all subsequent visits went off easily, and a cheerful, natural communication once more enlivened Mrs. Leslie's family circle. Mary seemed by degrees to creep out of her chrysalis, under the genial and delicate influences that surrounded her.

Alice had an exquisite talent for warding off difficult moments or subjects, and for setting every one at ease; nor had Mrs. Weston's presence been useless in contributing to this happy state of things.

This lady lingered on at Genoa, till reminded more than once by reproving letters from her friends at Geneva, of her protracted promise to visit them. At last she went, but not without having given Dr. Morton the hope, that at a later period he might claim in her a nearer and a dearer tie than that of cousin.

Mrs. Leslie and her two grand-daughters took up their winter quarters in a *palazzo* at Albaro, not far from Mr. Dickens' *pink jail.*

It was a large square solid building, painted yellow with white stone copings; it stood back at some distance from the road or rather lane, and a long avenue of gigantic cypresses led from the iron entrance gates to the mansion; in the space right and left of the trees was a square grass plot. On the other side of the house a green slope intersected by a walk led to the edge of a cliff; the wide sea spread beyond, the waves broke among the rocks below, at the foot of the precipice.

A parapet wall bordered this eminence, and formed one side of a terrace walk under trelised wines; in a sheltered nook at one end stood a huge ilex tree, and under its shade was placed a bench.

The whole family were delighted with the residence, and were soon comfortably settled in their winter quarters. Mark visited Albaro three or four times a week, and Reginald as often as his avocations permitted.

A few days after Mary's arrival at Genoa, and some time before the removal to Albaro, she had come into Mrs. Leslie's room with a letter in her hand, and said:

"Grand-mamma, I hope never again to do any thing without your knowledge and approval. I have here written to Mr. Powell; I think it is due to him to let him know what I have done. Also I wish, whatever change may take place in my personal destination, to give a certain portion of my property to the furtherance of a pious work, which I have had much at heart; the transforming the Grange at Westbury into a convent. In this letter I enclose an order for a considerable sum destined to that purpose; if you think me wrong to make that donation, or even to write at all, I will submit myself to your judgment, and give up either or both of these things which I desire to do, though I confess the sacrifice will be very painful."

Mrs. Leslie remained silent for a few moments, and then said: "God forbid that I should distress you, my child. Send your letter; Mr. Powell, you say justly, is entitled to some attention of the kind; and send the order too, none of us wish to interfere with that offering."

"There is a darling grand-mamma!" exclaimed Mary kissing Mrs. Leslie tenderly, and she left the room to despatch her letter.

"What could I do?" said Mrs. Leslie, much disturbed to Alice who sat by in silence, "I was afraid to thwart or irritate her."

"You did quite right, I think, grand-mamma," replied she, and she gave this opinion when later in the day the circumstance was communicated by Mrs. Leslie to Mark and Reginald, who both perfectly concurred in the same view of the subject. But all trembled for what the effect of an answer from Mr. Powell might be.

This answer came in due time. Mary kept it to herself, but she did not appear to have received any untoward impression from its contents. On the contrary, she seemed henceforth to be more cheerful, and to communicate more entirely with the rest of the family. The same thing, more or less, was remarked every time she received letters from Mr. Powell in the course of an occasional correspondence, springing out of the business with which he had been charged by her.

The ladies had not been long settled at Albaro, when Oliver in his joy at Mary's return, made hasty arrangements to leave a curate at Atherton, and his unexpected arrival one bright day was a

joyous surprise to the family. It must, however be owned, that certain misgivings were felt at first, lest by some mistake, springing from zeal or temper, he might overthrow Mary's progressively happy state of mind. Alice warned him strongly on this head; he took her hints in very good part, and maintained such delicate care to avoid all that could in the least hurt Mary's feelings, as would alone have sufficed to prove the truth of the Abbé Moreau's former expression, that "Oliver had a heart of gold."

His presence appeared indeed to have a beneficial effect upon her; the brother and sister had always been fond of each other, and from the day of Oliver's arrival, Mary seemed to feel home more complete, and to give herself up more to her natural affections.

By degrees her monastic way and looks wore off. Daily attendance at early mass in a neighbouring chapel, was the only remnant of her conventual habits which continued to subsist. Her buoyant spirits were returned. And when Reginald rambled in the country with his friends, or enjoyed with them the prospect from the terrace

walk, or listened to the sisters singing duets, or examined the rival drawings of the four young people, or joined in the cheerful talk of the party around Mrs. Leslie, and heard Mary's silvery laugh ring out once more, he would declare that the happy days of Grove House were transferred to Albaro.

Mark alone felt an undefinable something, which told him that all kind and familiar as Mary was with them, she still reserved to herself the future decision upon which his happiness depended, and warned him that he must not, till the appointed time, overstep the limits which had been implied in Mrs. Leslie's letter to Mary at Domo d'Ossola.

Fits of discouragement and dejection sometimes seized him, which nevertheless he expressed very rarely, and never but to Reginald or Alice alone, who each did their best to cheer him. But however he might struggle to keep his sufferings to himself, Mrs. Leslie knew too well every turn of his countenance, not to read what passed within him.

It was one of those days towards the end of

January, which often smile at that season upon the coast of the gulf of Genoa; the sky was clear, the sun was not only bright but warm, the air was genial, the Mediterranean shewed its deepest blue.

Mrs. Leslie, after taking a turn on the terrace was glad to retreat to the bench under the shade of the ilex. Mary sat on a stool at her feet. Alice was picking early violets, which spread thick their starry flowers on a sunny bank. Oliver at some distance, seated on the grass, which already shewed patches of new green, was sketching a picturesque bit of the view.

Mary looked out towards the west over the expanse of waves dancing in the sun beams, her eye wandered over the fantastic purple line of the mountain coast, stretching far away, and then returned to the foreground, where jutted into the sea a bold dark rock, out of one of whose fissures a gigantic Italian pine inclined its tall stem and fan-like head, reflected in the water, as in a mirror far below.

"How beautiful! how splendid!" exclaimed the girl. "Mere existence is delight here."

A deep sigh broke from Mrs. Leslie. Mary turned round startled.

"Oh, grand-mamma! what can make you sigh so? What can you be thinking of?"

"A variety of things, my dear."

"Too vague that answer, grand-mamma! Tell me, do, what it is that depresses you thus, in such a scene, and in such a day."

"I cannot without infringing a promise."

"To whom the promise?"

"To yourself."

"Then I absolve you. Say to me truly what is in your mind."

"Well then, if I must tell you the exact truth, I was thinking that in this world of beauty and delight, there are nevertheless many sad hearts, and that—one of these is—my poor Mark's. God knows whether he ever will be cheered by the happiness he longs for, or at least, whether I shall live to see it."

"My own dearest grand-mamma," replied Mary unhesitatingly, "there is not a thing in the world I would not do, never again to hear such a sigh from you. Here is my hand," she laid her

hand in that of her grand-mother, "it belongs to you, dispose of it as and when you will."

"But not without your heart, my generous darling."

"Don't be over scrupulous, grand-mamma," returned the young girl, hiding her face on Mrs. Leslie's knees, and then looking up in her grand-mother's face, a happy light dancing in her youthful eyes.

At that moment Mark came in sight, approaching from the house. Mrs. Leslie rose quickly to meet him. Mary stopped her, and, putting her hand across her grand-mother's lips, she said playfully: "Not a word to-day of our secret to that young man. A knight's probation of old was of seven years, and mine has hardly been proved for so many months."

Mrs. Leslie smiled.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mary, "there comes Reginald following his friend. That is well. You will not be indiscreet in full conclave, grand-mamma."

The whole party now gathered together, and after strolling for some time on the terrace walk,

returned to the house, Mrs. Leslie between Reginald and Mary, Oliver, Mark, and Alice, bringing up the rear. Artful Alice! From the sunny violet bank, close by, she had heard and seen all that passed under the old tree, and her heart beating quick with sympathy, she could not refrain from telling Mark the joyous secret. When they came to the steps of the house, she said: "Let me go in with Oliver, and do you follow when you are more composed, lest Mary should guess that I have forestalled grandmamma's communication, and be angry with me."

Truly Mark needed some little time to commune alone with his great and sudden happiness; presently he went and leaned against the outside of the open drawing-room window, and listened as in a delicious dream, to the hum of talking within, and then to the two sisters singing a duet. Never had Mary's voice sounded to him so soft, so expressive. By degrees the tumult of his feelings toned down sufficiently to flow out in spirited general conversation, when he joined the circle. Pleasant chat and gentle laughter whiled away the afternoon, then when the sun went down,

the still brighter and warmer influence of unspoken peace and joy hung over the party. Yet it was a relief to Mark when he found himself alone with Reginald under a clear Italian moonlight, and could open his full heart to him, who well partook all his friend's overflowing feelings.

"A man," observed Mark after a pause, "does not measure the full severity of a trial till it is over, just as on looking back at the precipice you have passed, you judge more clearly its depth. This day more than repays me for all I have suffered, yet I feel as if, unnerved by joy, I should never have the strength to go through again what I have endured. Well that is gone by, thank God, and my love, refined like gold in a furnace, has grown but more perfect; Mary's too proves to be the real precious metal since it comes forth unchanged from this fiery ordeal of her own creating. We have passed through storms and breakers, and now life lies before us like that sea sleeping in the moonlight."

Too much excited to seek rest on first reaching home, the friends sat talking till past one in the morning, and when at last they sought repose,

Mark's slumbers were full of sweet dreams about Mary.

A violent ringing at the house door startled both Mark and Reginald from their sleep before dawn of day. A messenger despatched in all haste summoned them to Albaro. Mrs. Leslie had been seized by sudden illness in the night. Both the young men full of terror, hastily retraced the road they had passed the preceeding evening, in a very different state of mind.

Their fears were but too well founded. The good old lady had had a second paralytic attack, so violent as to leave little or no hope. The remedies only obtained a return of consciousness.

Mary's first question was whether the Priest ought not to be sent for. He came, the last sacraments were administered, and the Rector hinted to Reginald that it was time for the family to withdraw, and leave the minister of religion alone to watch the expiring patient.

Dr. Morton knew that this was the custom in Genoa, but he knew full as well what would be the feelings of his friends upon the subject, so he replied courteously: "*Reverendo*, such is not the

custom in our country, do your duty, and permit us to do what we think to be ours."

The Rector bowed in silent acquiescence, no more was said about the matter, and the friends remained near the bed, administering the last soothing attentions and tokens of love in tender tone, look and gesture, while the Priest stationed in the room omitted not, ever and anon the repetition of a ceremony, the recitation of a psalm, an exhortation, or a prayer, graduated according to the sinking of life!

The expiring patient was continually roused from the iron sleep creeping over her, to hear what appeared to Alice rather the terrors than the consolations of religion. It was the first time that she had witnessed a scene of this kind, and still her wonder grew how man can robe himself in formal appointed vestments, and enact pageants even in the presence of the most awful of realities, whose implacable approach none can stay, death, to whom none can say even for one moment: "So far shalt thou go and no farther."

But such reflections passed silently and secretly

in her own mind. Her heart told her that all she saw in this case was right, for it was in unison with the feelings and the belief of the dear sufferer.

Pious Mrs. Leslie's deep faith and humble trust in the well known words and ritual, were touchingly manifest. The voice of the Priest never failed to call forth an expression of meek submission and steadfast hope. Speech failed, but her hands responded to the prayers, and the frequent sign of the cross expressed her acquiescence and reliance.

So serene, so gentle, so fervent her piety, it drew tears from all the bystanders, and bowed their hearts.

In the intervals of religious service, her grandchildren tendered restoratives with passionately tender care, and she looked lovingly into their faces.

Each time her beloved Mark's voice reached her ear, an expression of joyful affection seemed to bring back life to her features. None could resist the effect of that look which bowed the

head of him who received it with sobs over the beloved hand.

Once from Mark's face her eyes wandered, as if in anxious, disturbed search of something. Alice understood the silent inquiry thus expressed, and slipped into the next room, where Mary had remained in prayer since she had overheard the words of the Rector to Doctor Morton.

"Mary, grand-mamma looks for you, dearest," and putting her arm round her sister's waist, she led her to the bed, placed her next to Mark, and herself fell back a step.

When Mrs. Leslie caught sight of the loved faces, her features brightened, and for a moment lost the impress of death. She extended her hand in sign of blessing, which her four grandchildren knelt to receive. She looked at the group, her eyes rested on Mark and Mary side by side, a smile of eager, ineffable love broke forth once more, like the last effulgent ray-shot by the setting sun, and then all earthly expression faded.

Soon the solemn words from the Priest, "*Requiescat in Pace*," sounded through the

silence, and announced that the gentle spirit had passed away.

The whole household gathered together at this awful moment, bent during the last prayer, and then silently glided one by one from the chamber of death.

CHAPTER XV.

THE family gathered round the fire in the next room, looking at the fitful flame, and exchanging broken words, in that stunned dream-like state, which renders the first moments of bereavement more like an oppressive nightmare than a reality.

"Where is Mary?" said Mark, suddenly looking round.

Alice went to seek her sister, and found her engaged in prayer, in her own room, which she gently refused to quit, only begging to be left alone.

"Strange," observed Oliver, when Alice returned, "that Mary should thus segregate herself from us at this moment; but of course we must respect her feeling."

Reginald now insisted on tea being brought to

refresh the exhausted strength of his friends. Alice took a cup to Mary, who was with difficulty persuaded to taste it. After sitting through the sad evening with Alice, Mark and Reginald, each reciprocally softening by sharing grief, when Alice retired for the night, she found Mary still upon her knees, nor was it easy to induce her to seek some necessary rest.

The next morning however she joined the family with a composed countenance and calm manner.

She soon retired again to her room, but this time not solely to pray, for in the evening she gave Alice a sealed letter for the post, directed to Mr. Powell, saying :

" It is right he should be informed of our loss, and I have begged of him to say masses for our dear departed."

Even Mrs. Leslie had not dared gainsay this correspondence, far less could Alice do so. Besides by seeing it produce no evil effect, she had lost her original misgivings on the subject. She mentioned it to Mark and Oliver ; they thought with her that any observation would

be misplaced, and the letter was at once sent off.

A kind family in the town proposed that the young ladies should quit Albaro at once, and stay with them till future plans were settled.

But neither Mary nor Alice hesitated to refuse this invitation, however, considerate; nothing could induce them to leave the house while it contained the dear remains, and they were sure that, even afterwards, they should feel as if something of the beloved departed would still cling for them round the scenes, where last she was; moreover the quiet of the country would best suit the suddened tone of their minds.

The hitherto gently ruling spirit being gone, and Mary chiefly shut up in her own room, the direction of the desolate household fell chiefly to Alice; there she was, quiet, sad, and self-possessed, taking her share with Oliver and Mark in that succession of cruel details, which come to overwhelm a bereaved family, just when least able to face them. Reginald however did all in his power to spare his friends as much of these trials as possible.

According to the custom of the country, the mortal remains were borne from the house to the neighbouring church on the day of the funeral, and carried thence in the evening to their place of rest, which the family had chosen in the burial ground of the Capucin convent. A white marble headstone marked the spot.

Two days later a funeral service was performed for the deceased in the parish church of Albaro, and many looked with interest at the seat filled by the foreign family present at the ceremony, clad in deep morning.

"How pretty those two English girls are," whispered some.

"They are very interesting," said others.

As the party left the church, Mark offered his arm to Mary, but she took that of Alice and walked on.

Mark felt pained for a moment, but as he followed with Reginald, he said: "I respect, and even approve her reserve."

From that time Mary resumed her customary manner to him and to all about her, as well as her usual habits. The only difference which could be

observed was, that beside attending one early mass every day, she often staid to hear two or three, and daily returned to church for vespers. She was sometimes accompanied by Alice, sometimes by her maid, but when she wished to prolong her stay in church, she sent either the one or the other home, desiring only to be sent for later.

This increase of devotional practices gave some uneasiness to the family, but no one risked an expostulation.

"How very tiresome!" said Mary one afternoon, as she stood at the window watching the rain falling, as it never falls but in southern climates, literally in torrents. "How vexatious! I shall not be able to get to church."

"It will be fine to-morrow, I dare say," observed Alice soothingly. "You need not mind for this one day." There was a silence, during which nothing was heard but the heavy splashing of the rain, and the rattling of the windows in the wind. Then Alice ventured to say very gently, "You know you used not to hold so much to going every day to vespers."

Mary made no reply, but moved restlessly from the window to the fire place, and back to the window, then sitting down by her sister she exclaimed: "Oh! that grand-mamma had never allowed us to be brought up Protestants! That is a thought that disturbs me sadly."

"You know, Mary, that our dear good Abbé Moreau did not disapprove her doing so."

"True, she followed the guidance of her spiritual teacher, that is a satisfactory reflection, and you have done well to remind me of the fact." Then after a short pause she said: "Alice, if I give you a book will you read it?"

"Certainly, my dear sister, if my doing so can give you pleasure."

"But will you try to understand it, and let me explain some passages?"

"With all my heart," replied Alice cheerfully.

Mary left the room and quickly returned with a volume in her hand; it was one containing several of Dr. Newman's lectures.

Mary read some pages aloud, making observations as she proceeded, and Alice listened in docile silence, only now and then putting an inoffensive question.

At last her teacher shut the book, observing: "That is enough for to-day. I do not wish to tire your mind," and with evident satisfaction she retired to her own room.

"I quite disapprove of this," said Oliver peremptorily to Alice, when the next day she recounted the occurrence to him. "You are just putting yourself in harm's way; it is a tempting of Providence."

"Our opinions are not worth having," observed Alice quietly, "if they cannot bear a sincere and sifting examination."

"You are trusting vaingloriously to your own powers," replied her brother, "remember that Mary fell into the same snare before you. I am willing to hope that she will not succeed in seducing you to her way of thinking, but then how will you get out of the discussion without a break with her, far better avoided!"

"Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," said one wiser than either you or I, brother. "I cannot help feeling that this is a rather critical moment for Mary. Later other interests will take possession of her, and if then she finds

her present efforts end in disappointment, she will care less for it, and at least she will have the satisfaction of having done her best, and of not having been repulsed by me—Just now it is essential that her mind should not be thrown back upon itself, and nothing shall induce me to close any avenue to her confidence in me. The mere instincts of affection suffice to guide me in this matter."

"Well, Alice," said Oliver, impressed by her earnestness, "you must of course follow your own judgment and your own conscience."

Not long after this conversation, the two sisters were walking up and down the cypress avenue, when Marked joined them. He held in his hand a small roll of paper.

"I want to shew you," said he, "a pencil likeness of our dear grand-mother, which I have tried to make from memory," and he unfolded the sketch.

The resemblance was striking. Mary burst into tears. Mark let drop the paper, went up to her with soothing words, wiped away her tears, and passed his arm round her waist, drew her to

him; but she started back and flung him from her, exclaiming: "No, no, this is not well."

"Surely, Mary, we may grieve together for her we have lost," observed he.

"Let us rather pray together for her," returned Mary, "come with me," and she led him beyond the cypress avenue and along the road to the nearest chapel, and there they knelt and prayed together before the altar, while Alice, who had raised the portrait from the ground, made her way into the house, reflecting painfully upon the scene she had just witnessed; but dusk brought Mary and Mark home with composed looks and in serene temper.

Two days later came, directed in Mr. Powell's well-known hand, a letter to Mary. As usual, she took it in silence, and retired to read it alone.

Alice fancied her sister looked all that day more thoughtful than was her wont, but next morning no trace of the kind was visible, and more than a week slipped by, without suggesting any motive to suppose, that this epistle had produced worse effects than those already received from the same quarter.

The domestic management of the family still remained with Alice, and it chanced one morning that she and Oliver began talking of the return to England, and of various future arrangements. They settled it that Mark would go to Grove House, which was now his, and the sisters were to stay with their brother at Atherton, until Mary's marriage.

It was the middle of February; they thought of fixing the end of March for their departure. Mark arrived from Genoa in the midst of this conversation and immediately agreed to all that had been proposed. Presently Mary came from her room and joined the party.

"Mary," said Mark, "I have had a letter from England about some arrangements and alterations to be made at Grove House; you must give your advice, for it is your home, you know." A cloud came over Mary's brow, which warned him to add: "At the end of our year of mourning I mean, of course. Read that and tell me what I shall answer," and he held the letter towards her.

She put it gently aside, saying: "Grand-

mamma, you know, gave me a twelvemonth to make choice of my future."

"Yes, dear Mary," replied Mark with a beaming smile, "but I know that you were generous enough to shorten my probation and consent once more to be mine."

"Whoever told you so," answered she glancing in evident agitation at Alice, "did you no good service, and for that I am not responsible."

"What do you mean to say?" enquired Mark turning very pale. "Do you retract a promise given to our sainted grand-mother, who with her last look blessed our union?"

Mary laid one hand upon his arm, and pointing upwards solemnly with the other, said: "Our grand-mother's immortal soul, purged of human frailty, looks down upon us with purified love, and views and wishes very different from those of the flesh. It is quite true, I do not deny the fact, that at a moment when her mind and mine were both intent solely on the affections of this world, though she was unconsciously on the brink of eternity, I did give her power (willingly I did it and from my heart) to dispose of my hand to

you. But she lived not to repeat this consent; awful death swept away the idle words. The hand of Providence is there, and marks me dedicate to God."

Mark started from his chair, and stretching out both hands in a passionate imploring gesture, exclaimed: "Oh! Mary, have a care. I doubt if my life can resist this second blow."

"Heaven will grant you strength as to me," she replied. "Anchor not your hopes upon a poor mortal creature who may die to-morrow."

He paced the room in silence.

She poured out a glass of water from a decanter on the table, and drank as if to relieve choking; then continued: "Believe me, all of you; this time I will do nothing by stealth. God forbid, I should again fall into that sin. It has been perhaps a weakness to have delayed even till now laying open to you my irrevocable determination."

"Stop, Mary," cried Oliver, "I implore of you, stop. "Consider, before, led away as you are by jesuitical subterfuge, you break that man's heart."

"Peace, Oliver, it is not for you to speak, my

brother; if you had never been a Protestant, should probably never have thought of taking the veil. Our course is henceforth separate. I return to England, but not with you. Presently I leave this house to pass three days in retreat in the neighbouring convent. Thence a sister of St. Joseph, accompanies me to Chambery, and from that town one of the order will attend me on to Paris, where already wait for me two, who destine themselves for the Community of which I shall be Superior, and to which I give all my remaining property. May it please God to accept this atonement for the errors of my kindred."

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed Alice twining her arms round Mary. "You must not leave us. Think of me just bereaved of my grand-mother, you will not surely deprive me also of the elder sister who should fill a mother's place. Stay with me, instruct me, I will be docile, I will obey you as becomes a younger sister."

Mary seemed moved.

Alice continued passionately. "You cannot break all our hearts without breaking your own."

"If there was no suffering there would be no

sacrifice, Alice, and no merit. I only wish I could feel ten times more than I do."

"Mary!" exclaimed Mark, "this is sheer bigotry, which dishonours our faith. I put myself entirely out of the question, but consider your sister, your brother. Let your own natural feelings and judgment have fair play."

"Mark, I have learned to submit my heart to the guidance of holy men, and therein I have found consolation and strength. While I proudly sought to rule myself, all was error and struggle. I now rest in the tranquillity of holy obedience; stronger shoulders than mine have taken from my weak ones the burthen of responsibility. Oh! that you would seek comfort at the same source! Be generous, and spare a soul which has just escaped from the battle of doubt and hesitation, and has at last won the palm of peace."

"Mr. Powell it is," returned Mark with flashing eyes, "who has obtained this mastery over your soul."

"Don't, oh don't accuse Mr. Powell and pain her," interposed Alice.

Mary, unheeding her sister, replied to Mark's

observation, her colour rising: "Quite true I laid my misgivings and my aspirations before Mr. Powell, and he answered them as a conscientious man ought to do. I will moreover add that he pointed out the means of execution of my plan, with every due consideration for personal propriety, and for the dignity of the family."

"It shall not be," cried Oliver impetuously, "that a meddling Priest shall thus break the ties of a sister and of an affianced bride."

"Say no more, Oliver!" exclaimed Mark, "let her follow the destiny she has chosen." Then turning to Mary he added: "Go, heartless, proud, cruel woman; you never were capable of giving, or worthy of receiving true love. Go, but first hear me curse the hour when the early germ of a manly affection sprung up in my bosom, hear me curse every feeling, every recollection entwined with you, every joy, every hope, every wish of my wasted, blasted life. Now you may go."

He stopped breathless in the middle of the room.

Mary remained silent, alternately pale and red,

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He stopped breathless in the middle of the room.

Mary remained silent, alternately pale and red,

at last she rose and going up to him extended her hands, saying in a subdued voice.

"Friend of my youth, we must not part in anger. Grant me your forgiveness. My prayers shall follow you through life."

He grasped her hand convulsively. "I forgive you, still generous, though misguided, Mary."

"Oliver," said she, turning to her brother, "with you too I would fain part in peace."

"God bless you, my poor benighted sister. If I have ever been harsh or unkind, it was the infirmity of my nature. I am more than punished."

She held a hand of each of the young men in one of hers, at the end of a moment breathed in an almost inaudible whisper "Farewell," and left the room.

Mark staggered to the wall, against which he flung up his arms and leaned his head while a cry of "God help me," broke from his lips.

Alice cast one look towards him, and then rushed after her sister, who had already reached her own room.

"Mary, you will kill Mark, he will die."

"No, no," replied Mary hurriedly, "God will not permit it."

"Relent, oh! relent," still pressed Alice, and she clung to her sister's hands, and knelt at her feet.

Mary shook her off.

"Oh!" cried Alice rising. "Well for poor grand-mamma that she did not see this day."

The elder sister made no reply, but called her maid from the next room, and desired her to bring the gardener to carry a trunk towards which she pointed, to the neighbouring convent.

The girl seeing one of her young mistresses in tears, and the other struggling for self-possession, stood still in the middle of the room, looking alternately at each, till Mary repeated her command somewhat peremptorily.

When the girl returned with the servant, who at once obeyed his young lady's bidding and carried off the box; Mary said to the waiting woman, "Ghita put on your veil to accompany me."

"What!" exclaimed Alice, as if waking from a dream, "will you go to-day?"

"This day, and this hour," replied her sister with determination." The sooner the thing is done now the better. Mr. Powell advised me wisely to examine and ponder well before I took a decision; when even it was taken, not to hurry the declaration, but when I should have once announced it, to be rapid in the execution. This would spare both myself and my friends. My trunk has been packed more than a week. She paused a moment, then giving a volume to Alice, "There is the book we had begun reading together; keep it, and pursue your instruction."

"I care for no instruction but yours," replied Alice.

"Child, you may not so chuse the hand from which comes salvation. Those three books on the table are remembrances from me to Mark, Oliver and Reginald. After all," she continued, "this is not so terrible a separation; from Atherton you can easily come and see the Superior of Westbury convent. A fitting post, Alice, for one of our family."

She clasped her sister a moment in her arms, and hurried away.

Alice stood as one stunned, then rousing her-

self ran to the drawing room, exclaiming, "She is gone."

"Gone!" cried Mark starting up. He rushed to the house door, and saw Mary followed by her maid near the end of the Avenue. He called her name loudly; Ghita turned her head, Mary only hastened her step; the next moment she vanished behind the last cypress at the angle of the road.

Mark ran on, till at the foot of a tree he fell. Alice and Oliver quickly came up and found that he had fainted.

It required some time, and the application of the restoratives usual in such cases to bring back consciousness. Before the removal of Mark from the spot, where he had fallen could be attempted, Ghita, whom Mary had sent back from the convent door, came up to the group of servants gathered with the brother and sister round the prostrate form. She stood by weeping, wringing her hands, and breaking into exclamations, such as:—

"The Signora Maria is a saint!"

"She will go straight to paradise!"

"What a pity, oh what a pity!"

"Poor Sigr. Marco!"

CHAPTER XVI.

WITH considerable difficulty Mark was carried into the house, and placed in bed. A messenger quickly brought Reginald, and by the time he came the patient was in a high fever.

On the third day Dr. Morton pronounced him to be in imminent danger.

Alice then insisted on going to the convent, to let Mary at least know the fact; Reginald interested the Rector of the Parish in the circumstance and the good man consented to accompany the young girl.

Mary had left Albaro that morning for Turin and Chambery.

Alice obtained of the Rector to send a despatch to the Superior of the sisters of St. Joseph, in each of these towns, begging them to apprize

Miss Leslie that one of her family, named Mark, was lying dangerously ill. She also directed two letters, one to the care of Mary's banker in England, and one to that of Mr. Powell.

Nothing further could be done in that way, and now she gave herself wholly, with Oliver, to the care of Mark; the brother and sister relieved each other by his bed day and night.

Days past while the patient lay in delirium, and weeks elapsed during which he still hung between life and death.

Long and fearful was the struggle, through which he was however brought at last, by Reginald, most kind and skilful of physicians, Oliver most active and patient of attendants, and Alice, truly the guardian spirit of the sick room.

A time came when Mark was pronounced out of danger, but he remained in such a state of prostration, both physical and moral, as made the attendance more difficult than in the raging fever. Change of air, change of scene were tried. Oliver and Alice took the invalid from Albaro to Nice, from Nice back to Genoa, thence to Naples and Sicily; still the same leaden listlessness

weighed upon him. What little progress he might make was so slow as to be almost imperceptible.

Alice however found the means even in this state to cheer and soothe the sick man, as a woman alone knows how, and the nameless yet inexhaustible resources of her devotion carried Mark over this trying period.

It was months before Mark pronounced the name of Mary, and then he spoke of her as he might have done of one dead.

Truly she seemed to be so to her family; no tidings of her had ever reached them. No answer had ever assured Alice that any of her letters had been received.

At last in the autumn Mark's health began to improve rapidly, and made still more notable progress during the winter, which he spent with his companions at Rome.

Towards the end of February, Oliver's Curate wrote to inform him that the Rector's presence at Atherton would soon become necessary, as he (the Curate) must shortly give up doing the duty of the parish, being called by indispensable business to a distant county.

"Fortunate," said Oliver to Mark, "that you are so well, since I must go, and Alice also of course."

"I have a great mind to go with you," replied Mark, "I am so much better."

Alice looked doubtingly at him: "I do not think you are yet fit to do so," she observed, "however none of us must decide the matter. You shall come with us as far as Genoa, and we will submit the question to Reginald." And so said, so done.

"No, no," pronounced Dr. Morton, as soon as his advice was asked. "You are not to peril all you have already recovered of health and strength by rushing into the midst of the March winds and April showers of our misty island. You are going to stay with me till the middle of May, when perchance I shall take a run over to England myself, and we will go together. Then you will have the whole of the summer to gather strength in order to face next winter, north of the British channel."

Such was the plan proposed by Reginald, and quietly acquiesced in by Mark, Dr. Morton at the

same time easily persuaded Oliver and Alice to remain a week at Genoa.

He delivered to Alice a newspaper and a letter, come a few days before, directed in Mary's hand to Miss Alice Leslie, care of Dr. Reginald Morton, Genoa.

Alice hastened to her room that she might examine the contents of these despatches, which Mark had not seen her receive.

Mary's letter referred to the newspaper for the details of a ceremony most interesting to her, the dedication of the chapel belonging to the newly founded community at Westbury, of which, she (all unworthy) was now Superior.

This religious house numbered already twelve sisters, and twenty scholars in the school.

She knew that her brother and sister had gone through an anxious attendance on their cousin Mark. The illness she had learned by Alice's communications, the recovery through inquires made by Mr. Powell. For her cousin's restored health she thanked God.

She hoped that her endeavours before her departure to draw the mind of Alice into the

consideration of an all important subject, would not remain without fruit.

She described herself as perfectly happy, adding that she could not help looking with compassion on those less fortunate, subject still to the trials and anxieties of the world.

She ended by assuring Alice of her unchanged sisterly love, sending her affectionate remembrance; and praying Heaven to watch over and guide them.

The letter was signed

MARY,

Now Sister Teresa.

The article referred to in the county paper ran thus:—

"Our Town and County, or at least the Catholic portion of their inhabitants will long proudly remember a ceremony not less imposing than touching, which took place yesterday in presence of a dense throng of spectators, among whom we recognised the most eminent of our Catholic nobility and gentry.

"We allude to the Consecration by the Bishop

—— attended by his clergy, of the Chapel belonging to the Community of Sisters of Charity newly established at Westbury.

"This religious house has been founded by the pious munificence of a member belonging to one of our oldest and most respeeted Catholic families.

"Possessed of youth, beauty, station and fortune, Miss Leslie (we may without offending her modesty, mention her name, now merged in the humble appellation of Sister Teresa.)

"Miss Leslie, we say, aspiring to blessings above those of this world, and obeying the call of grace vouchsafed from on high, retires to the obscure call of a Sister of Charity and dedicates her life to God. She has bestowed without reserve her riches on the pious establishment, which before our astonished eyes has sprung up in little more than a year, for the consolation to the youthful, and the support and instruction of the poor.

"Justly and wisely is this example of pious abnegation and beneficence commemorated, for the edification of our and future times, by an inscription carved on a slab of marble, tastefully placed above the door of the chapel. Its purport,

expressed in classical Latin, is that the sacred edifice and the adjoining convent were founded in the year 1857, at the expense of the first Superior of the Community, Mary, grand-daughter of the late Anna Leslie, widow, and great grand-daughter of the late Austin Vernon, Esq., both of Grove House, in the county of ——."

Then followed an elaborate description of the ceremony, and a long list of the distinguished persons present.

Alice sat long gazing at the paper and the letter with a benumbed, comfortless feeling. A few silent tears made their way down her cheeks, but she wiped them away and roused herself. She had to prepare Mark gently, first for the fact communicated in these despatches, and then by degrees for reading them himself.

It was not without emotion that his eye met Mary's writing, and ran over the contents of her letter.

After a long silence he said: "It sounds chill and awful like a voice from the tomb. Truly it is the knell of her who has been long departed from among us. It falls upon a heart prepared and torpid."

The impression evidently weighed upon him, and Alice respected and even shared his feelings too well to strive prematurely to raise his spirits, but gradually he regained his usual serenity.

Two days which Alice was to spend in Genoa slipped by swiftly.

It might be that the effect of Mary's letter had depressed her, but as each day passed she felt a growing sadness. A break in her existence was approaching, which would separate the past and the future. There are few more impressive landmarks in life than a departure. She was about to leave one, who had been the incessant object of her care and thoughts for months. A certain degree of anxiety about him must pursue her. He might relapse; he might not be able to bear a winter in England; Reginald had hinted this possibility. In short, Alice had to struggle hard with thick coming painful feelings, but she did fight and she did conquer. None could guess at what was passing in the heart of that gently smiling, happily talking girl.

She was used to subdue her own impressions, and to think only of sharing and cheering those of others.

"When you will come," said she to Mark and Reginald, "the lilacs and laburnums will be out, and the roses budding. Grove House will be beautiful. Reginald, you hardly know Atherton; it is very pretty also, and I am rather proud of my garden there, I assure you. You will come in May, will you not?"

"Yes answered Mark placidly, or in June, hardly two or three months."

Nearly a week had elapsed since Alice's arrival at Genoa, when she received the following letter from the faithful Betsy, Mary's former maid, who had been left in care of Grove House. We venture to rectify the spelling of the writer, lest the reader should have to labour as much as Alice did; the style we leave in its primitive purity:—

"My honored young lady,

"These few lines come from me hoping as how you and the gentlemen are well as it leaves me.

"My patience! Miss Mary has been and gone and done it at last. Whoever could have believed such a thing?

"There, out of our wainscoted parlour window, I sees every day, over the trees, the steeple of that new chapel, and the top of that big house, that's built for all the world like the dismal place we was in there over the sea.

"Well! when I knew our dear young lady was come to Westbury, and that I might go, I could'nt have no rest till I had seen her. Ah! but bless your heart, it was a sad sight, though she smiled and talked as cheerful and happy as she could be —and looks purely. But then to see her in that black gown, awkward tippet, and her beads and crosses by her side, with that frightful poky cap. Oh, dear and worse than all, not a bit of her beautiful curls to be seen, her hair all cut off. I thought my heart would burst—till she made me laugh as she always could.

"And then she showed me all the house. Very clean, that I will say for it; but, oh my! a poor, miserable, naked place, not fit for a lady like she.

"There are many other nuns, that's their name, old ugly women, and they call her *mother*, her, poor sweet, young, pretty thing, that's never to have a husband or a baby of her own! And

that's what I call a sin and a shame, and it don't ought to be allowed.

"They call her the *Sufferer* of the convent, and well they may, for she must have suffered a pretty deal, I take it, to give up all her fortune, and dresses as becomes a lady, and her curls, and a handsome sweetheart, as was Mr. Mark, and all to build and live in that prison-like place. How so be she did always like her own way and now she have got it surely.

"One comfort is, they say she is mistress of all, as she ought to be, and the nuns do seem for to be very respectful, as is their bounden duty; and she has a parlour of her own, and she had me into it.

"They say too that she does so much good to the poor. You know, she always was a charitable young lady. Then many poor children go to her school. But la, Miss Alice, isn't your school at Atherton quite as good? And in my late honored mistress, your dear grand-mamma's time, didn't she do good to every body that was in want, without shutting herself up, and wearing an ugly cap. And has not dear Mr. Bevan had all the pensions kept on by the Steward, God bless him for it?

"But it's no use; the thing's done and she's pleased herself.

"So no more for the present except my duty to you, my dear young lady, and to Mr. Leslie and Mr. Beven.

"I am so happy that you and Mr. Leslie is coming home at last.

"Your humble servant,

"BETSY BRIARS."

The ingenuous details of this simple epistle excited among the party smiles mixed with some sad feelings.

And now the last day was come. On the following afternoon the travellers were to set out. Mark had been all day occupied assisting Alice in packing, and making those various arrangements which always cause some bustle about a coming journey.

After all had retired to rest, Mark chanced to return to the sitting room for a book which he had forgotten. The apartment lighted only by the one chamber candle in his hand looked dark and deserted. On a table lay a half unrolled ball

of packthread, and several cards with directions written in large letters, were scattered about. Alice's work box was no longer in its place, her books had disappeared. Every thing spoke of departure, it felt dreary, and he escaped quickly to his own room, where all familiar objects, undisturbed in their habitual arrangement, suggested ideas of repose, and of something like home. For the first time he came to feel that Alice was to go and he was to stay.

He went out upon the balcony, and looked into the starry night. His eye fell upon the light shining from the window of Alice's room. Now and then a shadow intercepting the rays denoted her still moving about.

Suddenly the light went out, and that window remained dark like the others near it. A painful feeling thrilled through Mark. "To-morrow," thought he, "there will be no light at all in her window, no flitting shadow, all will be dark as now. He felt a choking sensation. How nervous this illness has made me," said he to himself; he left the balcony and went forthwith to bed, but sleep would not come.

His imagination followed step by step the approaching journey of Alice and Oliver. "To-morrow she will be at Turin; the next night in a carriage toiling up for hours among the heights and precipices of Mount Cenis. Then rushing down to Laus-le-bourg, and Lyons, and Paris. And all the time I shall be here."

They had been so long, so constantly together, it seemed strange, unnatural, that they should be thus parted.

Only two months, and he. would be following the same road. Two months! Sixty days and sixty nights! Very long this appeared. Then he thought of Atherton. He saw Alice in the sitting-room, in the garden, at the tea table, at the piano. Her kind smile, her cheerful voice seemed to throw a sun-beam over every thing.

His fancy then turned to Grove House. Poor Grove House! He imagined himself sitting in the wainscoted parlor, alone. His heart sunk, and he took refuge again in the thought of Atherton, and of Oliver's and Alice's looks of friendly welcome. How fortunate for Oliver to have such a sister! Some day perhaps she would marry.

The remembrance shot into Mark's mind, that Mary had once told him, that Alice had once received and refused an offer from Mr. Avening. He was still unmarried—he might renew his offer. Besides there were many others—and like the fantastic procession of Banquo's posterity, a whole set of marrying men in the neighbourhood of Atherton, passed in a second before the vision of his mind, till with Macbeth, he could have cried, "Ye fear my eyeballs."

He thought the night intolerably hot, rose, opened the window, and remained long cooling his forehead in the breeze.

"Already up, Mark!" exclaimed Alice, as she entered the sitting-room early next morning: "You do not look well," casting her rapidly observant eye upon him.

"I am quite well, but I did not sleep last night."

"A proof that you are indisposed."

"No, not so, only I had a revelation."

Alice stared, a little alarmed.

I am not losing my senses, though your startled looks seem to say so. "Alice, it has been revealed to me that I love you."

"It needs no ghost to tell us that," replied she quietly, though her heart began to beat quick, she knew not why. "We have always loved each other from infancy."

"True, but I did not always love you as I do now. Fool that I was, for years I lavished the strong affection, the deep devotion of my heart upon an insensible idol, while I passed you over, all unnoticed. You, whom now I have learnt to know. You, who have been my comfort, my stay, my life. But for you—but for you, I should not have survived till this moment—without you I cannot live. You I love wholly, intensely, passionately. You alone could I ever clasp to my bosom as my wife." And he pressed her closely to his heart, whispering, "Ah, Alice! say I may hope you will one day come to love me as I do you."

She bent back her head, cast upon him one look of intense unutterable affection, and her eyes became suffused in glistening tears, that mixed with a beaming smile. Then she gently threw her arms round his neck and said: "I have always loved you entirely; I never could have married another man."

When Oliver an hour after came bustling into the room already in his travelling dress, Alice laid her hand quietly on his arm, saying: "Brother, I am going to stay with Mark, and you are not to leave Genoa till we are married."

And so it was. A fortnight afterwards, a quiet nuptial ceremony was performed, first in a Catholic church, then in the English Protestant chapel, and in the afternoon of that day, Oliver with a satisfied heart, and giving an affectionate blessing to his sister and brother-in-law, set out for England.

The first morning after his arrival at Atherton, he was struck by a spire and a gable end, hitherto unknown to him, rising at some little distance behind the trees. He at once understood this to belong to the Convent of Westbury. Presently a bell began to ring in that direction, and then again, again and again, at almost every hour of the day, signal for some of the appointed services, prayers, occupations, meals or recreations, in the exactly regulated life of the nuns. It may be supposed that Oliver's nerves were somewhat disturbed by these unwonted sight and sounds.

However, some days of reflection made him determine, partly from feeling, and partly from a sense of duty, to go and see Mary, his sister still, as Alice had often said, albeit one of Charity.

He called at the convent, and asking to see the Superior, was immediately admitted to her private parlor.

Oliver was far more moved than Mary. She waited quietly till he had recovered composure enough to enter into calm conversation.

She was looking well, and, not only her words, but her whole bearing expressed complacent content. She declared herself much satisfied with the marriage of her sister (which Alice, when it was determined on, had announced to her by letter.) "The more satisfied, allow me to say, Oliver, as my sister having married a Catholic, although not a zealous one, has a chance of good instruction."

The lady Superior shewed her brother the establishment and school. Oliver could not refrain from silently observing, that the deference paid to her by the nuns was not without its gratification for the humble sister Teresa. Lastly, she led

him into the chapel which was small but of elegant architecture, and was evidently much pleased by Oliver's sincere praise of the building. She called his attention to a side oriel, upon the stained window of which were discernable the arms of the Vernon and Leslie families. "Here," said she, "each day mass is said for the souls of the family of the foundress."

These words were uttered much in the voice of one repeating a lesson by rote.

Presently a bell tinkled. "That is the call to meditation, and an hour of silence," said Mary quietly. "You can go out that way," and she opened a small door which led to the road. "My hour for receiving visits is from ten to eleven."

Oliver went forth and Mary retired into the interior of the building.

Oliver wrote to Alice an account of this interview, which had left upon him, he added, a depression of spirits he could not throw off, and which was increased by the fact, that at least every other time he had to go to Winterford, he was sure to meet Mr. Powell, and had to return his very polite bow.

"In short," ended Oliver, "Mary transformed, her eternal bell, her chapel, her nuns, and her Chaplain, are too much for me, and make Atherton intolerable. I have made up my mind to exchange this living for one in another country, if I can find an opportunity of doing so, and I have already taken steps to that end."

Mark remained thoughtful for some time after listening to this letter, and then said:

"It seems to me that poor Grove House too would be a sad place for us now. The faces and the voices of the past would haunt us within, and the sights and sounds of the present would pursue us without. What say you, Alice, to waiting till we see where Oliver pitches his tent, and making our home near him?"

"The same idea crossed my mind," replied she, "but I did not know how you might feel."

"We generally feel alike, I think, my darling," observed he putting his arm round her neck.

Oliver's impatience to quit Atherton, induced him shortly to accept an exchange at considerable loss for a living in Devonshire.

the giving of the prizes

There Mark and Alice joined him, and settled in a pretty cottage near a town on the sea side.

Grove House is let to strangers.

Faithful Betsy is at the head of Alice's establishment.

Reginald, with Sophy Weston, now Mrs. Morton, were the first visitors at Ivy Cottage.

Mark has obtained for Padre Salvatore the chaplaincy of a Catholic place of worship near his dwelling.

We think we hear some of our readers say :—

"No doubt Alice will join the church of Rome."

We believe, on the contrary, that nothing is further from her intention. Nor does this cloud the sunshine of domestic happiness, in which basks Mark's reviving spirits and health, and which makes him often call his Alice the sweetest and best SISTER OF CHARITY.

FINIS.

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